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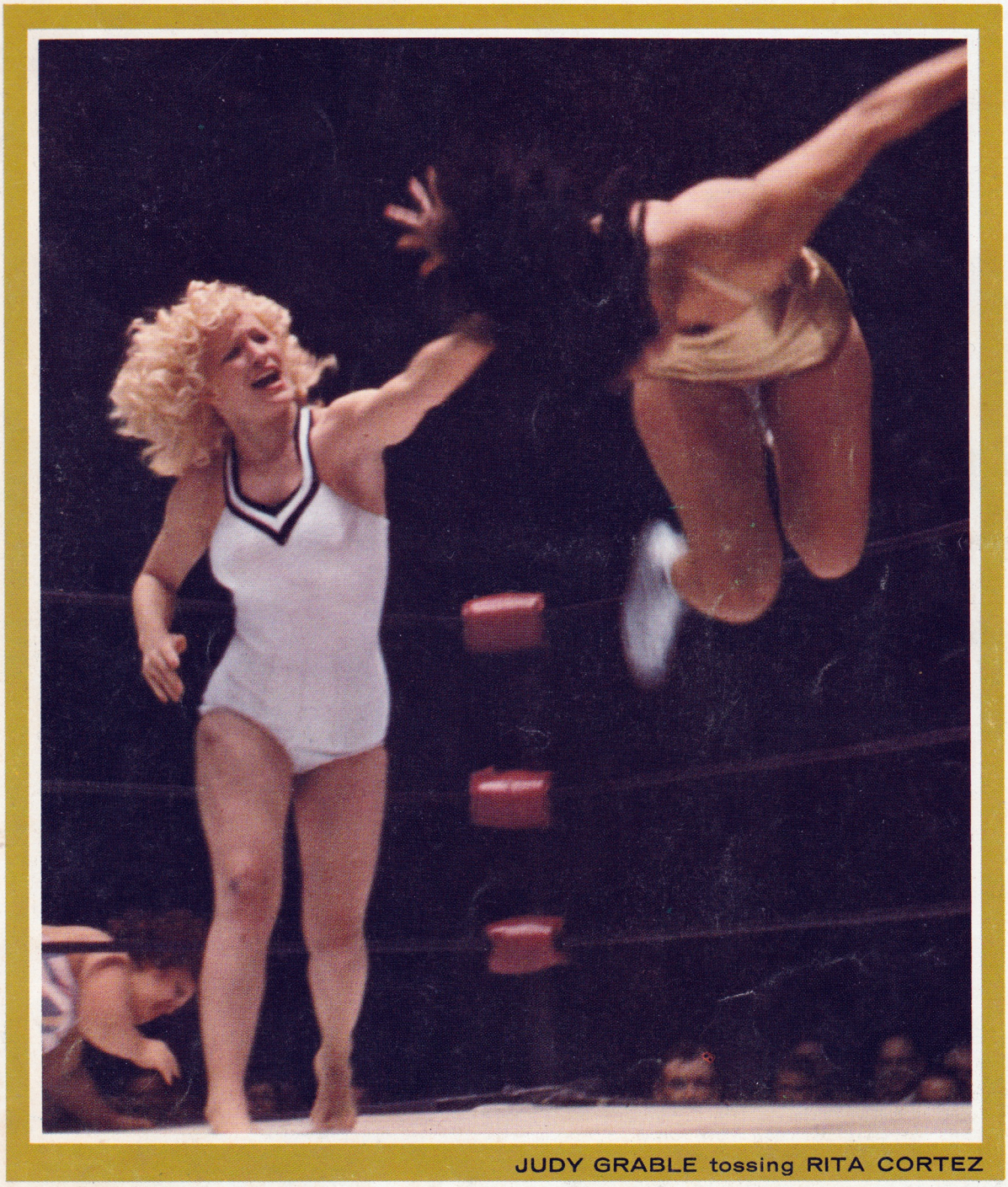

JUDY GRABLE tossing RITA CORTEZ

'Latin Fans Are Monsters,' says FRAN GRAVETTE ★ VERNE BOTTOMS: 'I Tarred and Feathered My Own Husband' ★ BABY CHERYL: 'Why Do People Stare at Me?' ★ PLUS many more exclusive features

FOLD OUT FOR FULL-COLOR PIN-UP: BETTE BOUCHER–PRINCESS LITTLE CLOUD

GIRL WRESTLING PIN-UP SERIES NO. 2

BETTE BOUCHER (front) AND PRINCESS LITTLE CLOUD

STORY BEHIND THE PICTURE

Wrestling barefooted has its advantages. It allows a wrestler better control of his body, gives him greater speed, and in the case of a difficult maneuver which requires "lift off," such as a drop-kick, gives him more spring.

But there are also disadvantages. Perhaps the most dangerous is that it leaves the toes as vulnerable a target as the fingers. Many a wrestler has been incapacitated when his fingers were pulled apart and the skin between them torn. Since the tissue separating the toes is even more delicate than that between the fingers, it is easy to understand the risks a wrestler takes when he works in bare feet.

Judy Grable is called "The Barefoot Contessa" because she has a shape that makes her look like a Greek statue, and because she always wrestles without shoes. "I don't think I would last more than five minutes in a match if I had anything on my feet," Grable says. "In fact, I don't understand why any wrestler wears shoes."

But one night in Odessa, Texas, Judy wished she had worn shoes. Her opponent was that equally delicious-looking blonde, Brenda Scott, who likes Grable like Churchill liked Hitler. The match had been underway about fifteen minutes when Brenda tied Judy in a leglock and began fooling around with her toes. Scott cleverly worked her way into such a position that she was able to keep Grable tied up by using her own legs alone. This, of course, gave Brenda free use of both her hands. For Grable, the situation was critical. Every time Brenda yanked her toes apart, Judy screamed in agony. The referee must have been a sadist because he just stood there and watched. Judy finally had to give up or risk being crippled. They helped her out of the ring and to the dressing room where a doctor rubbed vaseline over the bruised tissue between Grable's toes, then taped her toes together to help the healing process.

Judy was out of action for about ten days. "I really wasn't able to walk without pain for two weeks," Judy said, "but I was back wrestling as soon as I was sure my toes weren't going to fall off."

One month later, Grable and Scott were rematched in Houston, Texas, and when the referee brought them to the center of the ring for instructions, Grable didn't take her eyes off Brenda's left foot.

"I wanted her to know what I was going to do," Judy later explained. "I wanted to shake her up."

Judy did shake Brenda up, as the picture on this page shows. Even when the referee ordered them back to their corners to await the opening bell, Grable kept her eyes glued to Scott's left foot. It was her target for the night.

Trying to hide her concern, Brenda whirled around and growled, "Just try it! Just try whatever you're thinking about and see what happens to you!"

Judy tried. And how! Before Brenda knew what hit her, Grable had her left shoe and sock off and was yanking apart Scott's toes as if they were matchsticks. This was Brenda's night to quit. And she did, after only 6 minutes 11 seconds. ■

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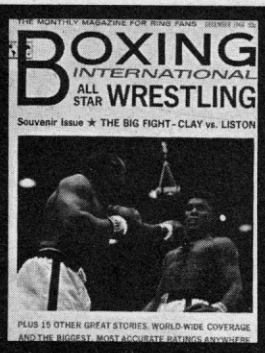

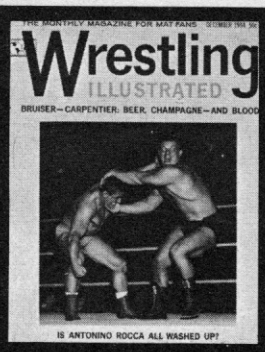

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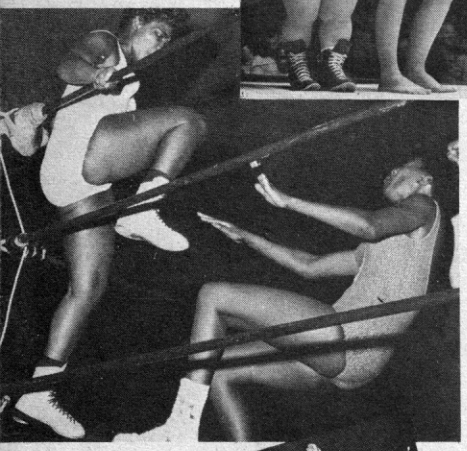

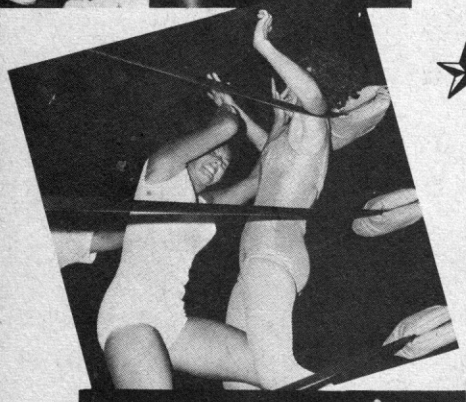

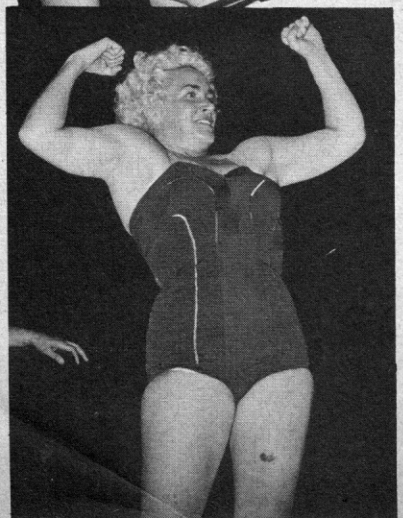

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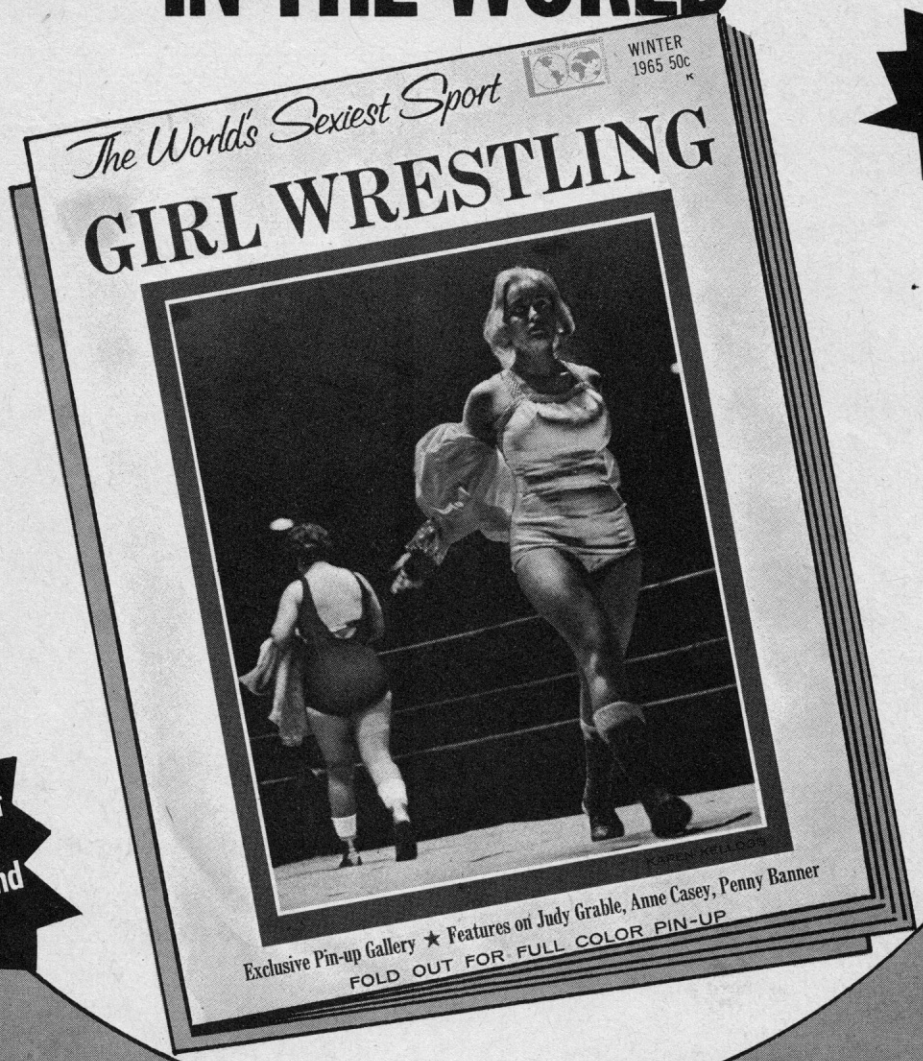

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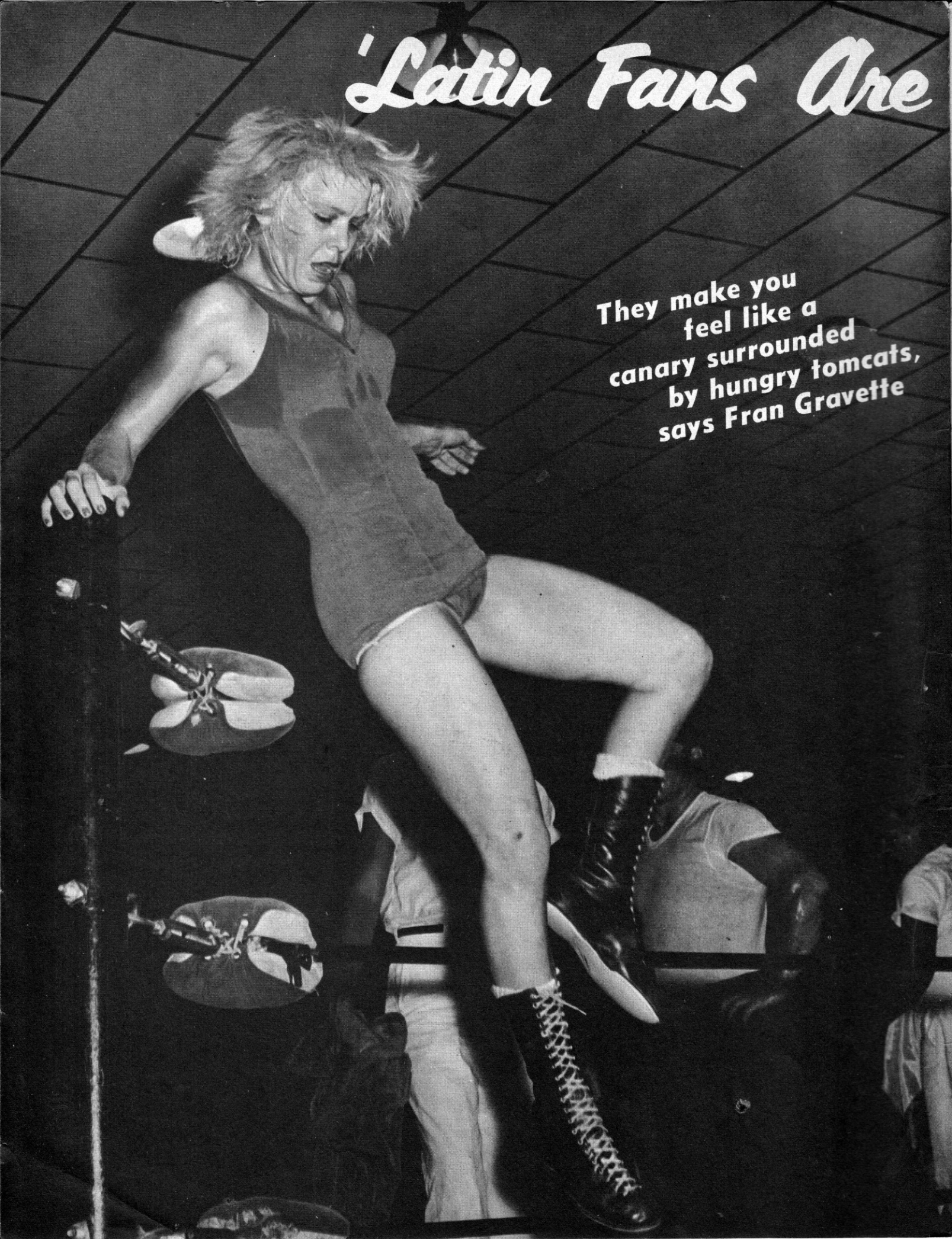

'Latin Fans Are
They make you
feel like a
canary surrounded
by hungry tomcats,
says Fran Gravette

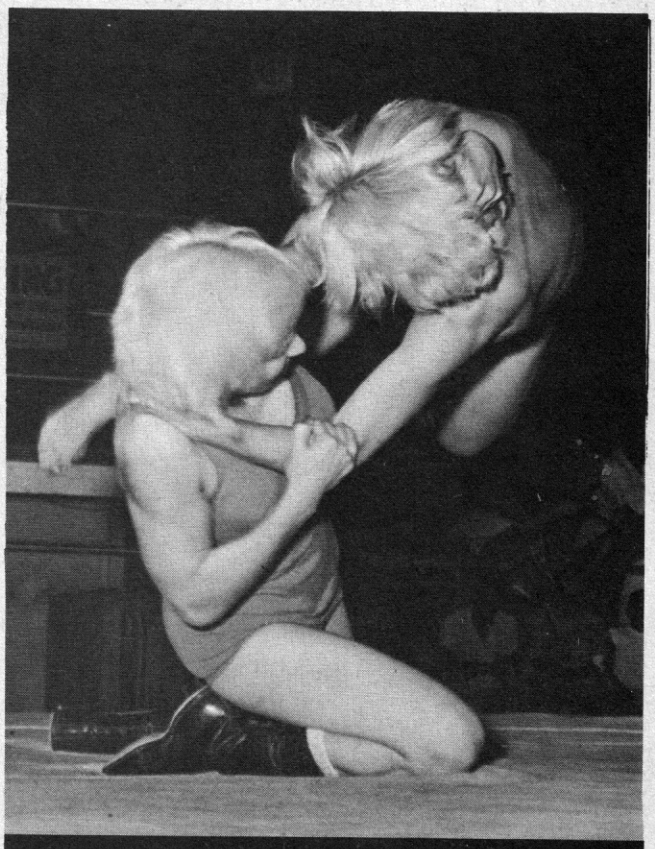
Sex-Mad Monsters!'

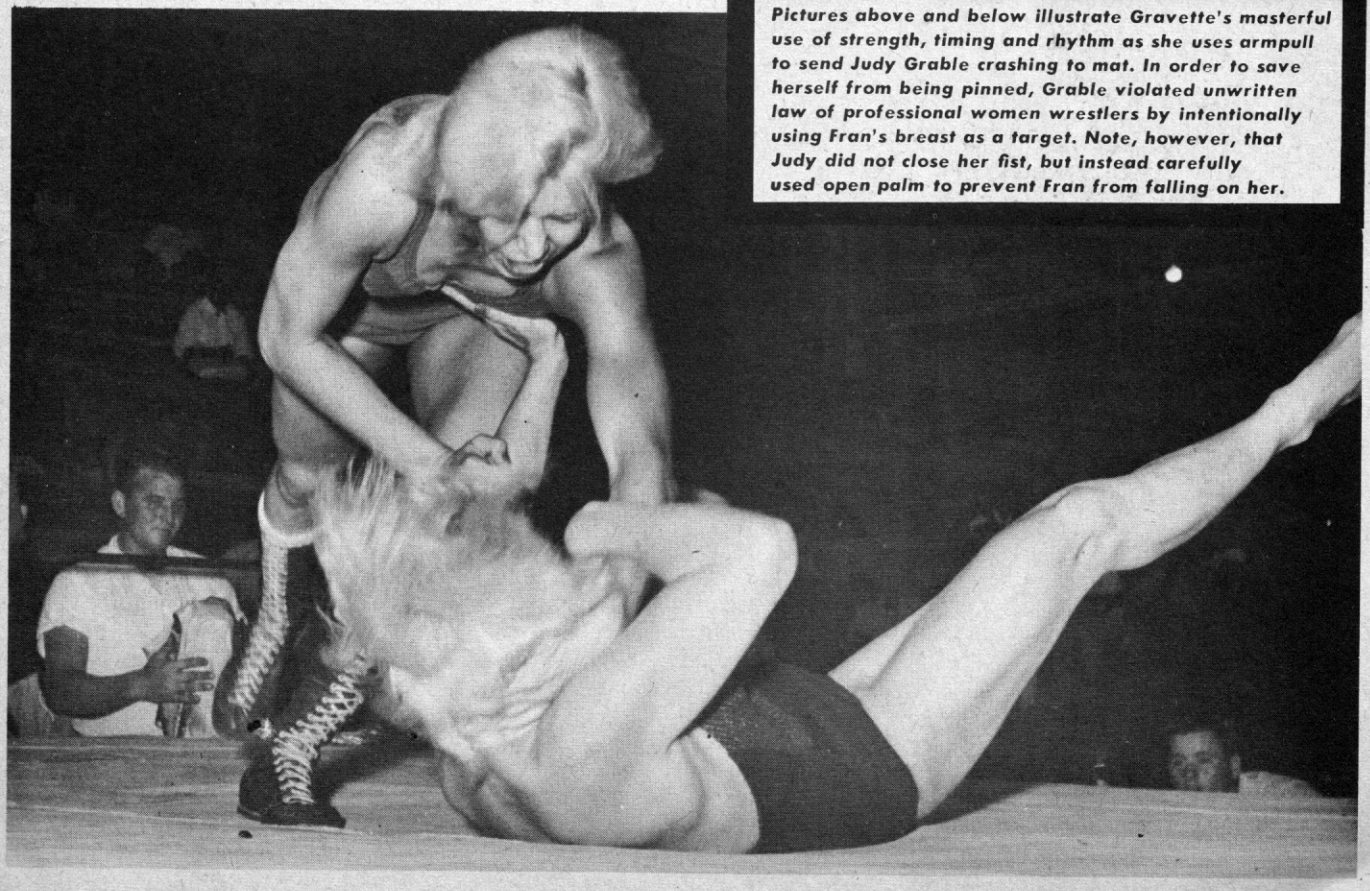
(Editor's Note: When GIRL WRESTLING writer Dave Gregg went to interview 26-year-old Fran Gravette in Memorial Hall, Joplin, Mo., he was prepared with a list of questions a mile long. But he never got to ask her a single one. Something was bothering the "Blonde Bombshell" and before Gregg could even pull out his pad, she started unfolding an amazing story about an unknown chapter in her career. Dave Gregg hurriedly jotted it all down. When he had finished typing his notes, he was so impressed by Fran's vivid account that he sent it to us with a note suggesting we print it in its entirety, just as she told it to him.)

By FRAN GRAVETTE

I've got a lot to tell you, but first let me get one thing off my chest. It's something that's been burning me up for a long time, though I've never mentioned it to anybody before.

Anyway, do you remember that controversial magazine article written some years ago by an anonymous woman author? It was called *Latins*





Pictures above and below illustrate Gravette's masterful use of strength, timing and rhythm as she uses armpull to send Judy Grable crashing to mat. In order to save herself from being pinned, Grable violated unwritten law of professional women wrestlers by intentionally using Fran's breast as a target. Note, however, that Judy did not close her fist, but instead carefully used open palm to prevent Fran from falling on her.

Are Lousy Lovers. Well, I don't know if they are or not—and I'm not fixing to find out. But this I *do* know: they make the lousiest wrestling fans in the world.

A strong statement? Sure. But it's true. When I got started in this business, promoter Buddy Lee got me bookings all over the United States and Canada. I received a fine reception almost everywhere. Then I visited Puerto Rico and Mexico . . . and learned all about Latins—*the hard way*.

If you're not a girl—particularly a fair-skinned blonde—you just can't understand what it's like to be in a country of dark-skinned men whose only thought is to see how far they can go.

Now, I'm no prude. I'm flattered by male attention, same as any other normal girl. But there's such a thing as going *too* far. That was the case with those Latins. They pinched and pawed and gave me that devouring look. Oh, how they looked at me! They made me feel like a canary surrounded by hungry tomcats.

It was bad enough when I was just trying to walk down the street. But they were absolutely impossible in the arena. I'm glad I don't speak Spanish, but a girl couldn't mistake the meaning of those ringside remarks. That kind of speech is international.

That wasn't the worst of it, though. Once the matches got under way, they forgot about sex—temporarily at least—and went completely berserk. I lost count of the times I was scratched, burned and slugged. See these scars? They're the result of cigar and cigarette burns.

I guess I should consider myself lucky. I *could* have been hospitalized by the things they threw into the ring. They're great ones for tossing overripe fruit, bottles, bricks—even their shoes—at the performers. You should have seen the ring after a match. It looked like a garbage dump.

My worst experience occurred in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where some maniac stabbed me in the thigh after I had been thrown out of the ring. This nut was all set to drive his knife into my stomach when somebody grabbed him.

That Puerto Rico was something! The men were just as bad on the highways as they were in the arenas. One day, while going from San Juan to Ponce, a 30-minute drive, I saw 30 wrecked cars. All those people there drive like schnooks. Puerto Rico—you can have it. Mexico, too!

When I made some remarks about the boorish

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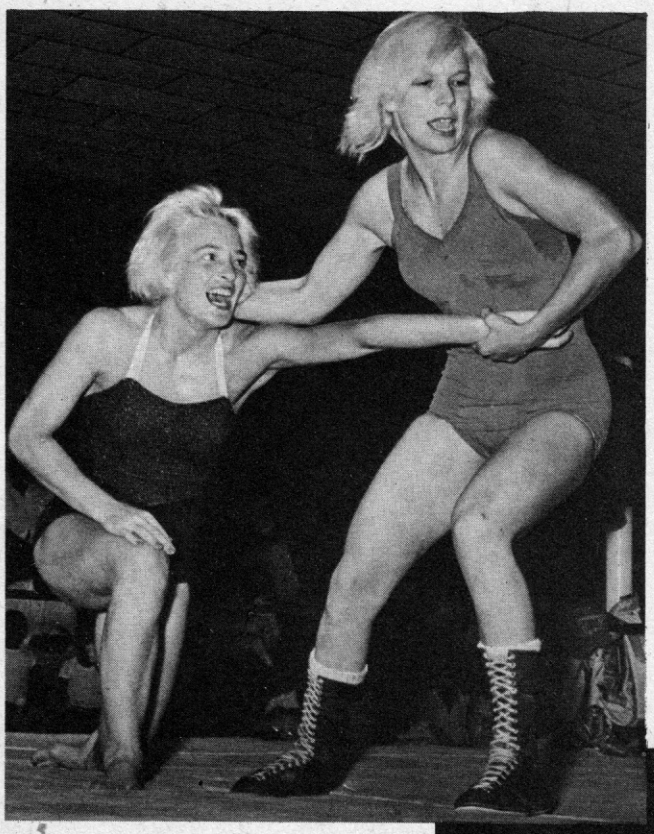
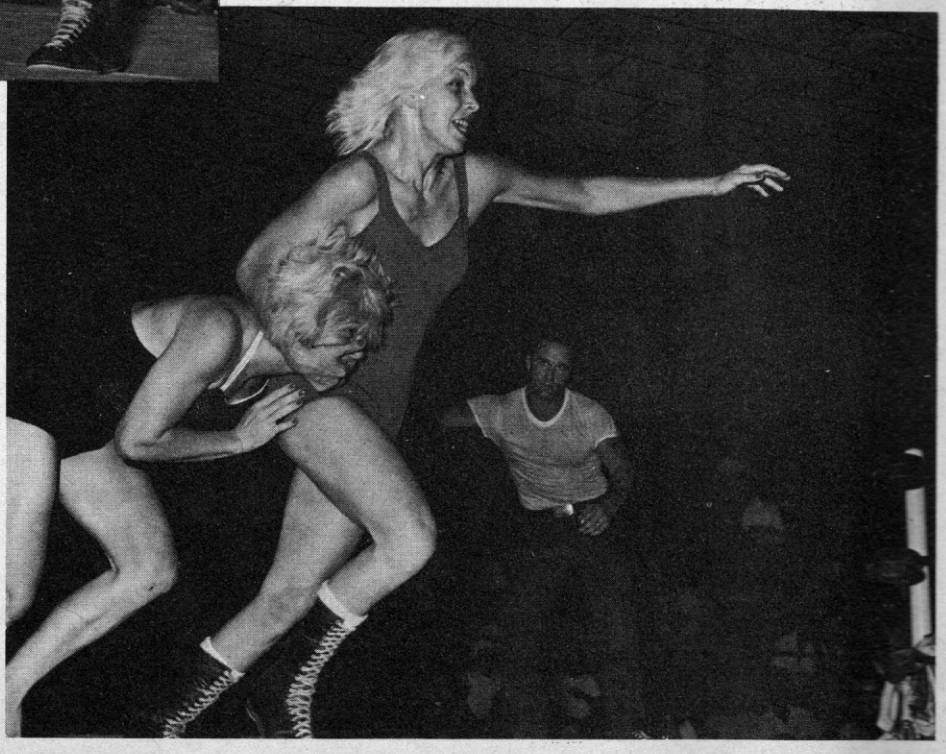


Sweat pouring from her body, Fran grabs Grable's arm, takes dead aim at ringpost fifteen feet away and . . .



. . . under a full head of steam, sends Judy on her way to defeat. The side of Grable's head struck protruding turnbuckle on post, knocking her unconscious.

'Why Do People Stare at Me?'

Baby Cheryl blinked when our reporter asked her about this. "You're pulling my leg," she said. And so he was— but not in the way she thought.

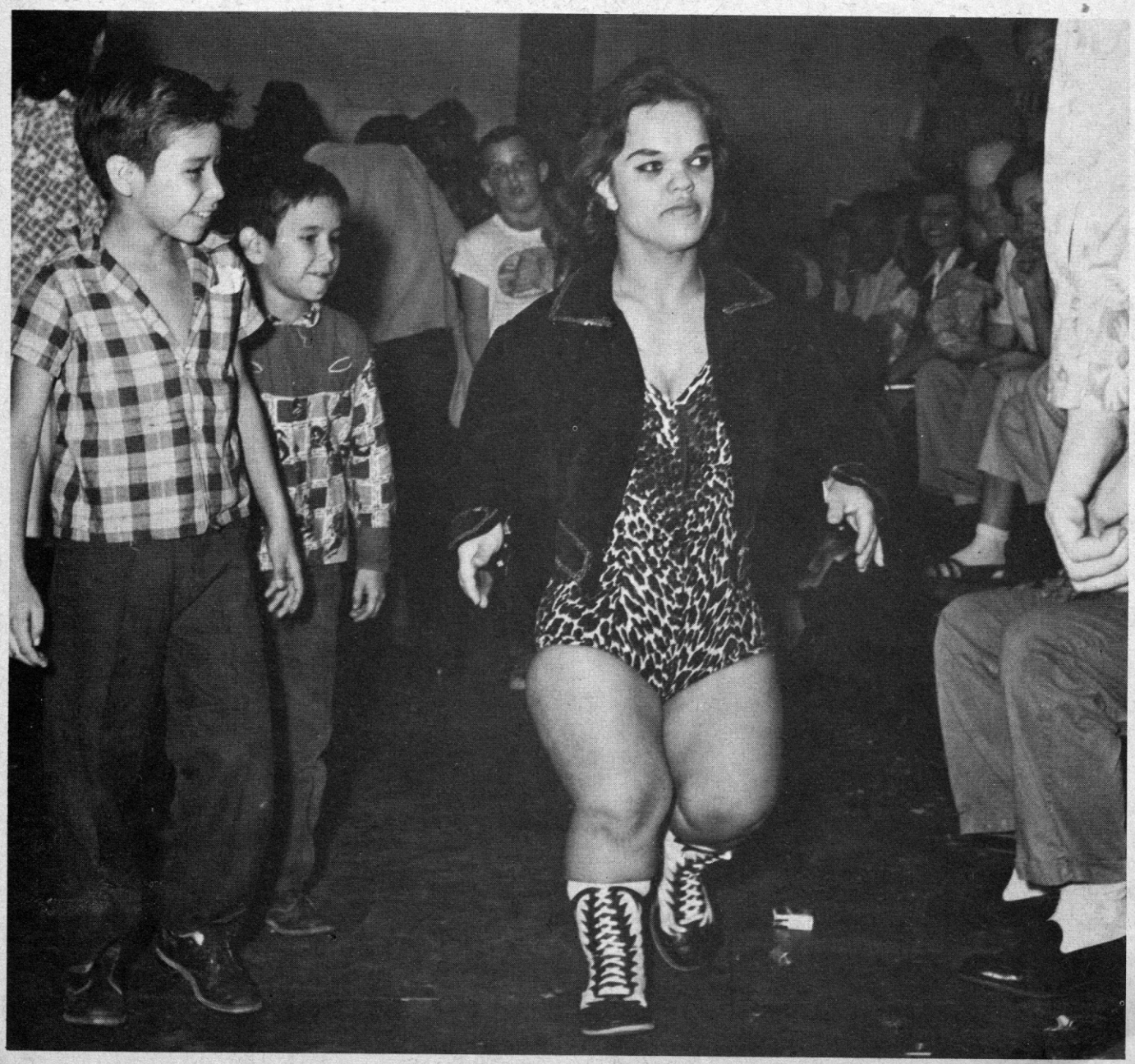
By BOB VERLIN

You can't help falling in love with Baby Cheryl the minute you set eyes on this vivacious, musical-voiced brunette. I know I did when I visited her in her dressing room in Houston, Texas, before her match with blonde Doll Paige.

Cheryl, who's just 43 inches tall and weighs only 88 pounds, was lacing her black-and-white boots with the big "B" on them when I entered, and she looked so cute I wanted to slip her into my coat pocket.

As we batted the breeze back and forth, I found myself getting more and more enamored of her. She's bright and lively and has a keen sense of humor. But what captivated me most about her was her laugh. Except it wasn't really a laugh . . . it was more like the tinkling of little bells.

I know this sounds corny as hell, but that's the effect Baby Cheryl has on you and you have to talk to her to believe it. She's a great talker, too, even when you



tread on such sensitive ground as her reaction to people always staring at her.

We put it to her straight: "Cheryl, when you go into a strange town and are walking around with time to kill, do you wonder why people stare at you?"

Baby Cheryl looked surprised, because the answer seemed obvious. "Why do people stare at me? I guess it's because they wonder who I am. They must think I'm in some kind of show business. But they don't bother me. They just look and wonder and they want to talk to me and yet they don't."

"But you don't *really* know why they stare at you?" I asked with a straight face.

"N-o-o . . ."

"Well, I'll tell you. It's because you look like a pixie and they feel like cuddling you."

That tinkling laugh again, and: "Oh, you're just pulling my leg."

"No, no, I'm serious!"

"Well, thank you, Bob. It's nice of you to say that and I'm glad to hear it because I have a lot of trouble with my size, as you can imagine . . ."

"I *can* imagine. I know if *I* were you and were walking down the street and along came a great big German shepherd or a Doberman pinscher, I'd get ready to run. Would you be scared by a big dog?"

"Not at all. I'd probably try to ride him, like a horse. I love horses, you know. I have some at home—dogs, I mean—but they're all small ones—chihuahuas, cocker spaniels (I used to raise them) . . . and now I have a white poodle named Maurice. He travels with me all the time."

"Lucky dog. But getting back to what you were saying about having trouble with your size, what did you mean specifically? Something like walking into a restaurant and bumping into a stool?"

Baby laughed. "Something like that happened to me just last week. I went into this restaurant —and, of course, the first thing I looked for was a table or a booth. They didn't have any—only bar stools. And they're pretty high. I finally climbed up on one—but oh, boy!

"I've had such problems lots of times. Especially if I'm wearing high heels and going shopping anywhere. Sometimes the curbs are so high I feel as if I'm jumping into Grand Canyon when I cross the street."

"What do you do if you're crossing the street with a crowd of people and they surround you?"

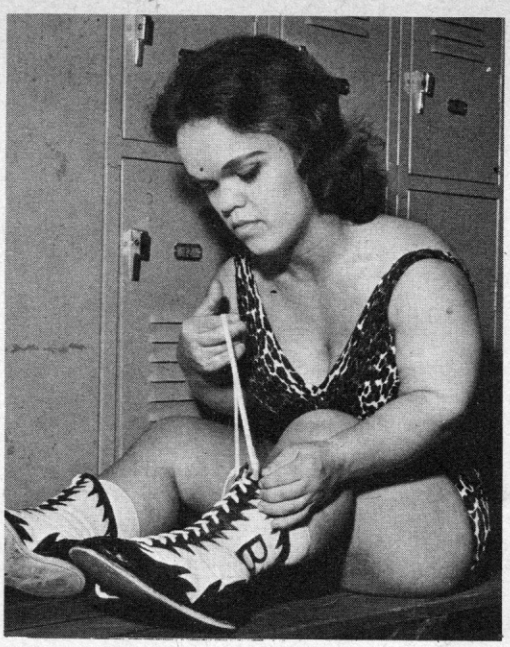
The musical laugh and: "I try to look up at the lights to see where I'm going. But sometimes people are going every which way and they stumble over me and 'Ooops, excuse me!' — you know . . ."

"Baby, I know you like to dance. What happens when a big guy asks you for a spin around the floor?"

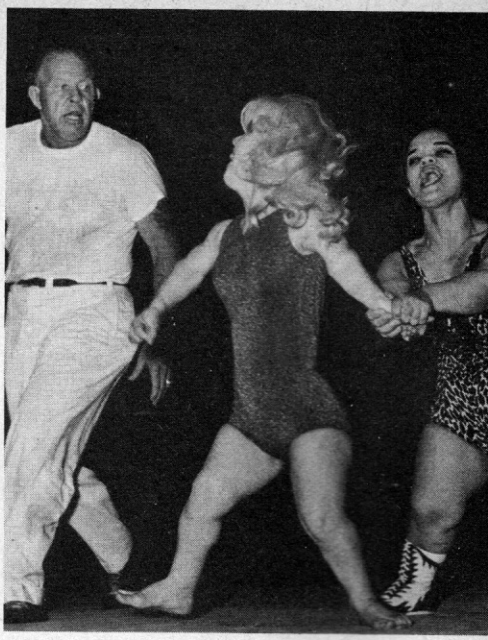
Cheryl's face lit up with a big smile. "I was in Omaha the other night and got bored sitting around in my room, so I went out to a dance.

"This guy comes up to me—he's six-foot-seven—and he asks me for a dance. I look up at him and say, 'Are you *sure* you want to?' I was sitting down, you see, and he didn't know I was a midget.

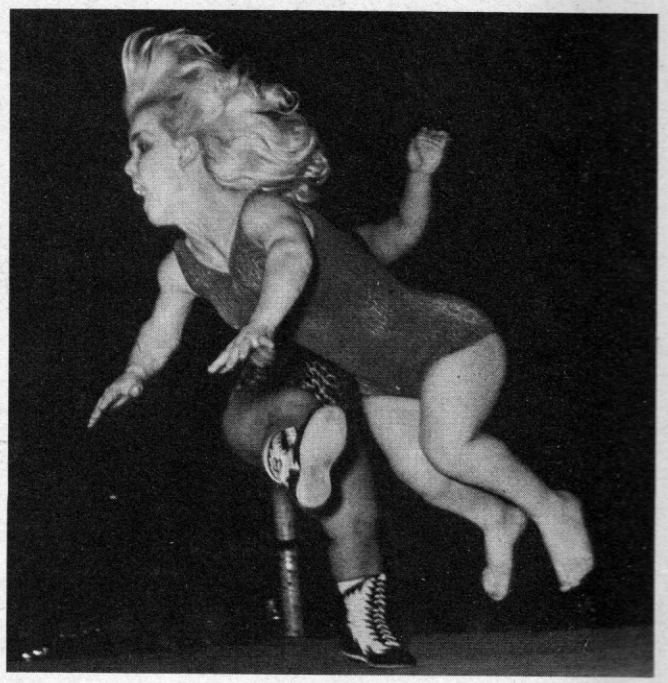
"He said, 'Sure I'm sure; come



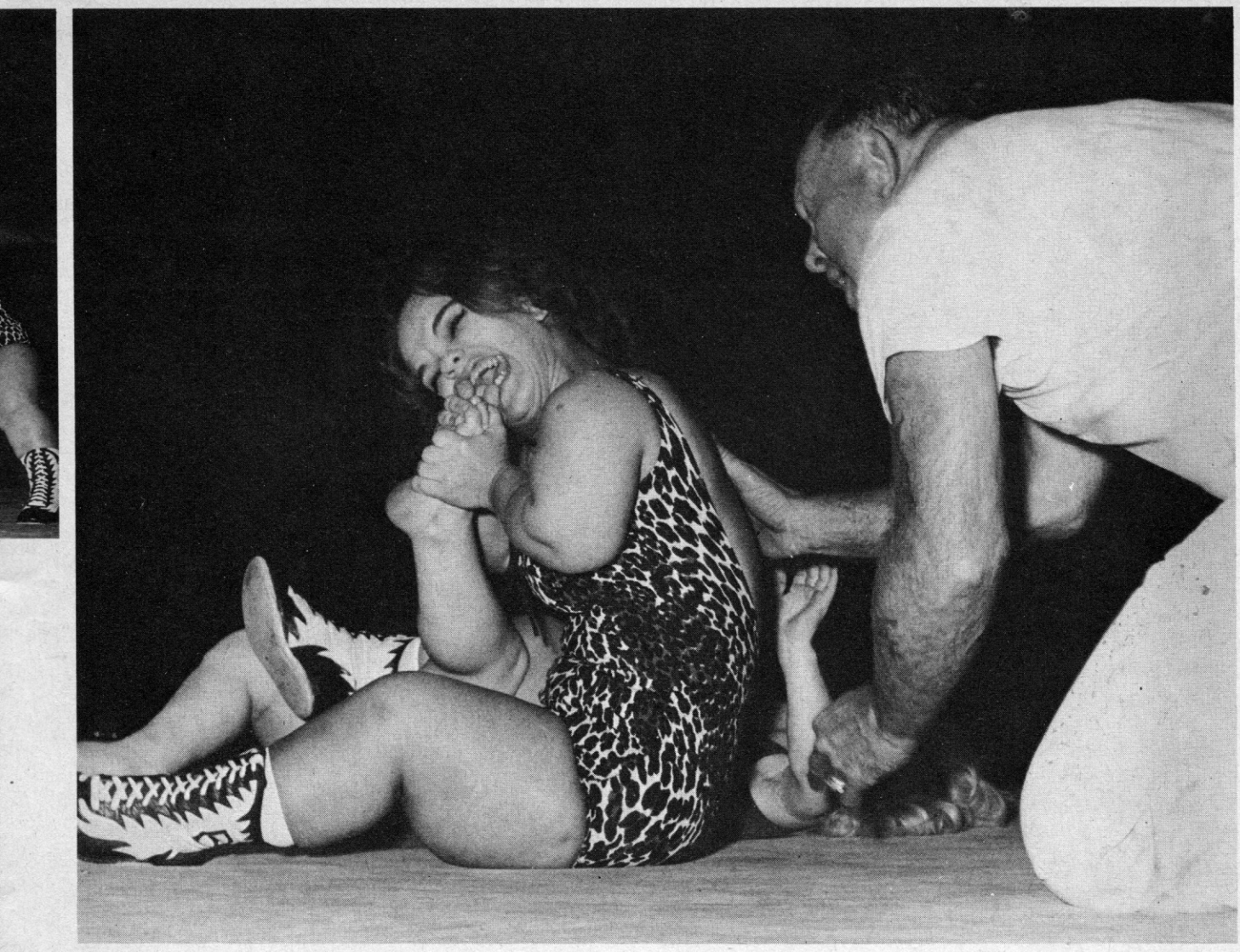
Only 43 inches tall, Cheryl has no trouble finding a spot in a crowded dressing room.



Nailing Doll Paige in a wristlock, Baby prepares to spin her into ropes . . .



. . . Catching Paige on the rebound, Baby aims a kick at Doll's midriff. Paige hit the canvas like a —what else?—rag doll and Cheryl proceeded to maul her with vicious chops to the head.



When Baby tired of rearranging Paige's face, she spiced things up by gnawing on her foot. Baby is normally a very amiable girl but, in the ring, she feels "as if I own the world."

on.' When I stood up, he was astonished. 'What have we *here!*' he said. Well, he danced with me. He had to bend all the way down, but we had a ball. Funny thing, I always attract big guys at a dance."

"Baby, you don't have to answer this question if you don't want to—but are you happy the way you are?"

"Yes, I am. I get a lot of fun out of life. I'd be a lot happier if I could eat all the Italian food I wanted—but I've got to watch myself or I'll put on too much weight."

"If you did, your boy friends wouldn't like you, would they?"

"Oh, I don't know about that. I've had no complaints yet!"

"Would you marry a midget?"

Baby Cheryl thought for a moment. Then she said: "Height wouldn't make any difference. My mother is a midget—she's 41 inches tall; but my father is normal-sized, 5-foot-7. My sister is normal-sized, too."

"Cheryl, you look so cute I'd marry you myself."

"Flatterer!"

"No, I mean it. You're smart. you've got lots of charm—and you're a really snappy dresser. Do you have any trouble buying clothes?"

"No. I wear women's clothes. I buy a size 8 dress and just shorten the hem. I make my own wrestling jackets." She showed me a few. "Aren't they pretty?"

"M-m-m-m. You cut a pretty striking figure when you come into the ring."

Baby Cheryl has cut a striking figure ever since she got into professional wrestling about five years ago.

How did she get started? "I went to the matches in my hometown, Duquesne, Pa., one night and got to talking to some of the midget boys there and they told me about a promoter in Columbia, S.C., who trained girl and midget girl wrestlers.

"They told me this promoter, Buddy Lee, wanted to start something different down there, so I got in touch with him and he made me a very attractive offer. And here I am."

Despite her sunny disposition, Baby Cheryl is a terror in the ring. "Let me tell you something about that," she said. "When I get into a ring I feel as if I own the world. I don't care what any-

We asked Cheryl if big dogs scared her. "No," she said. "I love dogs." Here she looks over toy poodle, which is almost as big as she is.

body thinks. I'm out to win because the more I win the more money I make."

"What do you want out of life, Cheryl?"

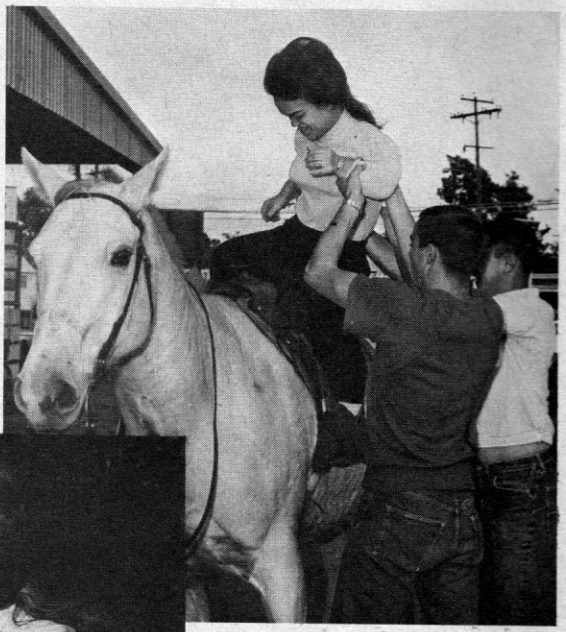
"When I retire, I'd like to open a business . . . maybe a kennel. But my biggest ambition is to get married, have children and a home of my own. And I hope to be able to do that before I'm an old woman."

Baby will leave wrestling with great regret because she loves the sport. "I've been all over and met a lot of nice people. It's a wonderful life and I would recommend it to any girl.

"There are only about 12 or 13 midget girl wrestlers in the business. There's room for a lot more. I know it's tough for midget girls to get jobs. So my advice to them is, get into wrestling. If anybody is interested, I'll be glad to help them out. I'll even train them, if they want."

That's just like Baby Cheryl. She's a little girl—but she's got the heart of an elephant. ■

Baby doesn't have any problems buying dresses to fit her. "I buy women's clothes, size 8, and just hack off the bottom," she says.



Cheryl loves to ride horses but naturally has difficulty getting into the saddle. Here she gets an assist from a couple of stable hands.

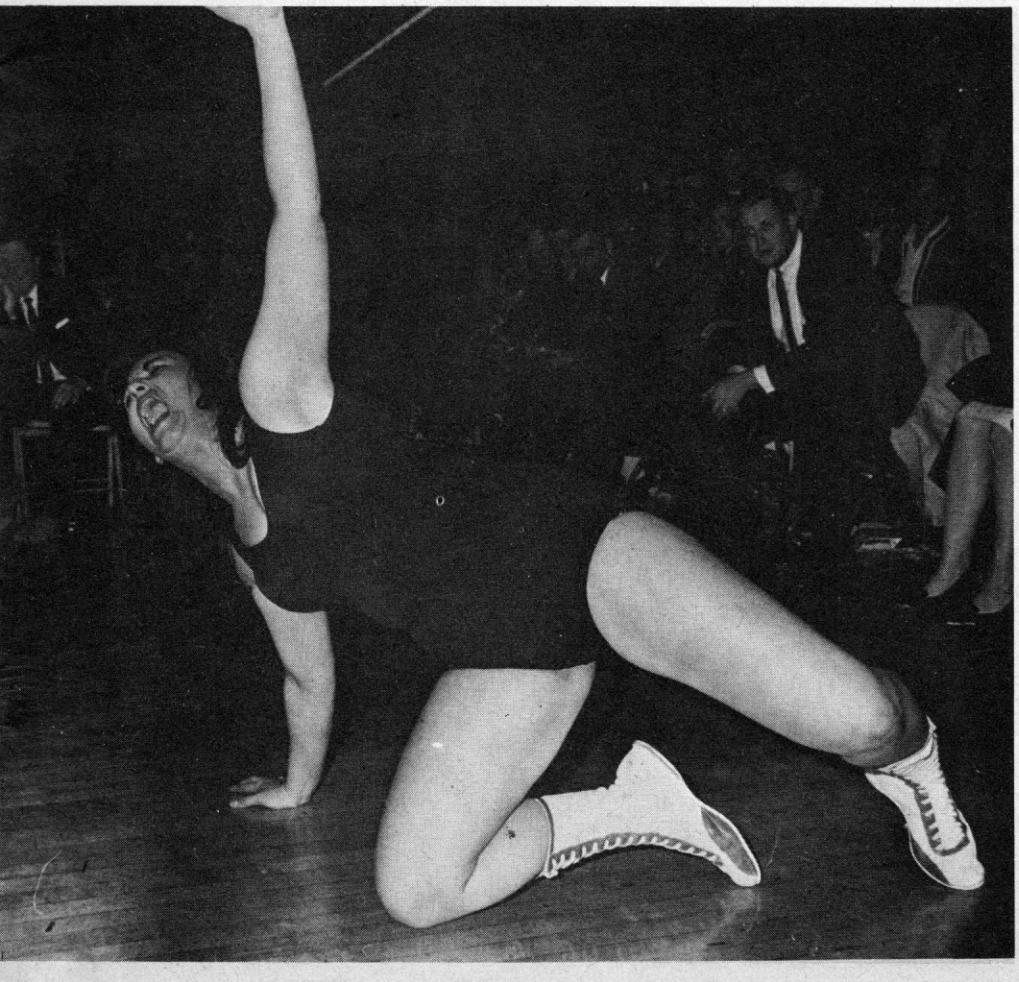
Spending an exciting afternoon at the circus, Baby met Jimmy Armstrong, famous midget clown. She got kick out of watching Jimmy paint his face in his dressing room.

By TOM WHITNEY

TEENAGE ERROR from TERRE HAUTE

'Nobody's going to tell me what to do,' says Toni Rose, wrestling's newest villainess. 'I know what I want and I know where I'm going —right to the top . . .'

Toni is all smiles (above) as she poses for our photographer. Moments later, she was yelling "Foul!" after being knocked out of ring (below).



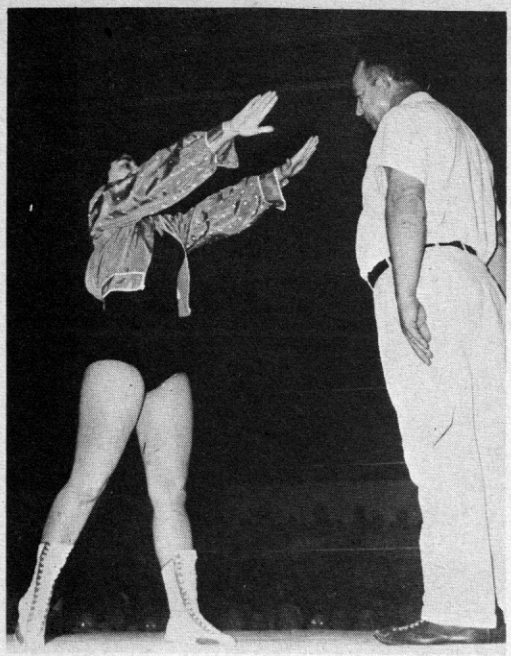
The first time you look at 19-year-old Toni Rose, you get the idea that she'd look fine and dandy clad in a little apron and concocting a succulent meal for her husband in an all-electric kitchen.

But this dark-eyed, raven-haired beauty, who hails from Terre Haute, Ind., isn't ready for aprons and kitchens — not yet. She's a career girl, and her working clothes consist of a tight black swimsuit, a pair of white boots and a pinkish-red jacket.

As wrestling's newest villainess, Toni is on her way up and she doesn't have time for the domestic life. "Oh, I've thought about marriage," she says. "What girl hasn't? But if I married every boy I wanted to, I'd have 20 husbands following me around. Let's face it, I'm having the time of my life."

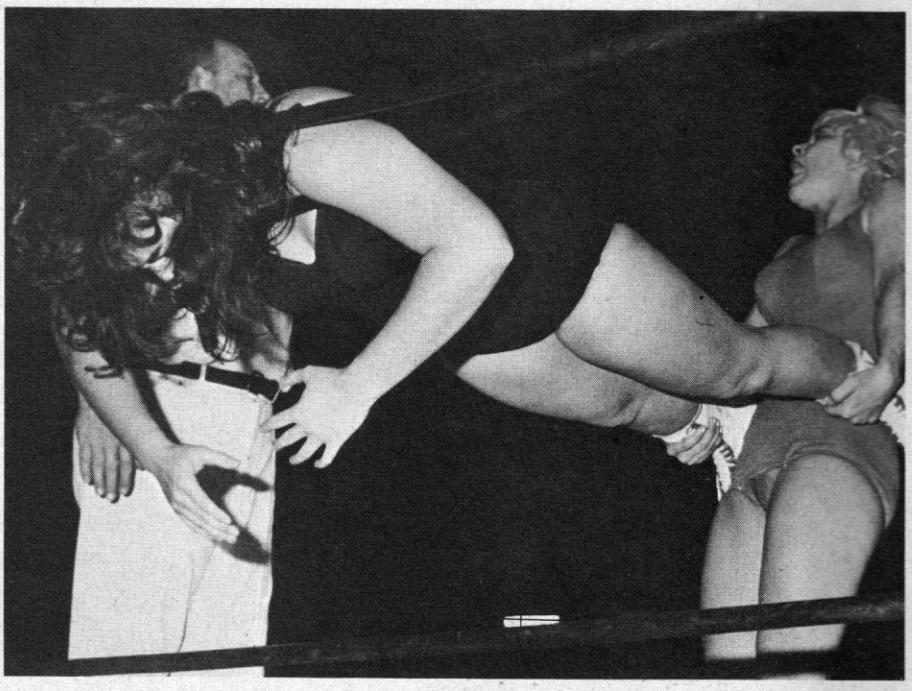
Toni Rose IS having the time of her life—and if there's a big element of risk in her work, why, that just makes things all the more challenging.

"When I get into the ring," she says, her dark eyes flashing, "I



"My hands are clean," Toni Rose tells referee Lucky Roberts before match at Norfolk, Va. But Roberts looks doubtful.

Toni yelps with pain as Penny Banner tugs at her legs. Rose wriggled loose, but Banner nailed her again, flung her into the ropes and . . . (see photo below).



. . . entwined Toni's head in the top rope strands. The referee warns Penny to let go, but she refuses and continues to yank at Rose's legs, to crowd's delight.

know someone is going to get hurt. This is a dog-eat-dog business. You know that old war term about 'kill-or-be-killed'? Well, that's how I look at it."

It's a harsh viewpoint and you wonder how she got that way, because a girl with her looks could go far in almost any field.

Want an answer? Toni Rose's story goes like this:

As an only child, Toni never knew her father, a policeman who died in an auto accident when she was a year old. Toni's mom, today, is a nurse in Terre Haute's St. Anthony's Hospital.

The only man around the house was an uncle, who helped care for the girl who was to become an honor student at Gerstmeyer High School and the envy of every All-American boy in Terre Haute.

All the aptitude tests said Toni Rose would make a good teacher. She had brains, looks and ambition.

But there was one other thing that the tests overlooked—her desire to be a professional wrestler.

"Foolishness!" said her uncle. "Nonsense!" said her mother.

"All my friends and relatives said it was just a childish whim, like wanting to be a fireman or a cowboy or President," Toni recalls.

No one believed she was serious. That is, until about two years ago when she packed her bags, kissed her mom and walked away from Terre Haute. Nobody was going to stand in her way . . .

Things haven't changed since then. Toni still doesn't take no for an answer.

"I know what I want," she says. "All my life, I've fought against other people's wishes, but I know now that nobody's looking out for No. 1, except No. 1.

"That's the way I think every time I enter that ring. It'll be my opponent who'll come out of there with the bruises. Not Toni Rose. Yessir, that's me, the positive thinker."

In her brief but brilliant mat career, Toni has beaten some of the best—Bette Boucher, Princess Little Cloud, Dorothy Carter, Brenda Scott and Judy Grable, among others.

Then, in a recent one-fall match in Norfolk, Va., Toni met Penny Banner. That set-to lasted only eight minutes, and it ended with Toni Rose asking, "What happened?" She had been beaten, but not before she had given Penny a genuine rockum-sockum battle.

Losing to a topflight performer like Penny Banner is no disgrace,

but it hurts, nevertheless, and it slows the race to the top.

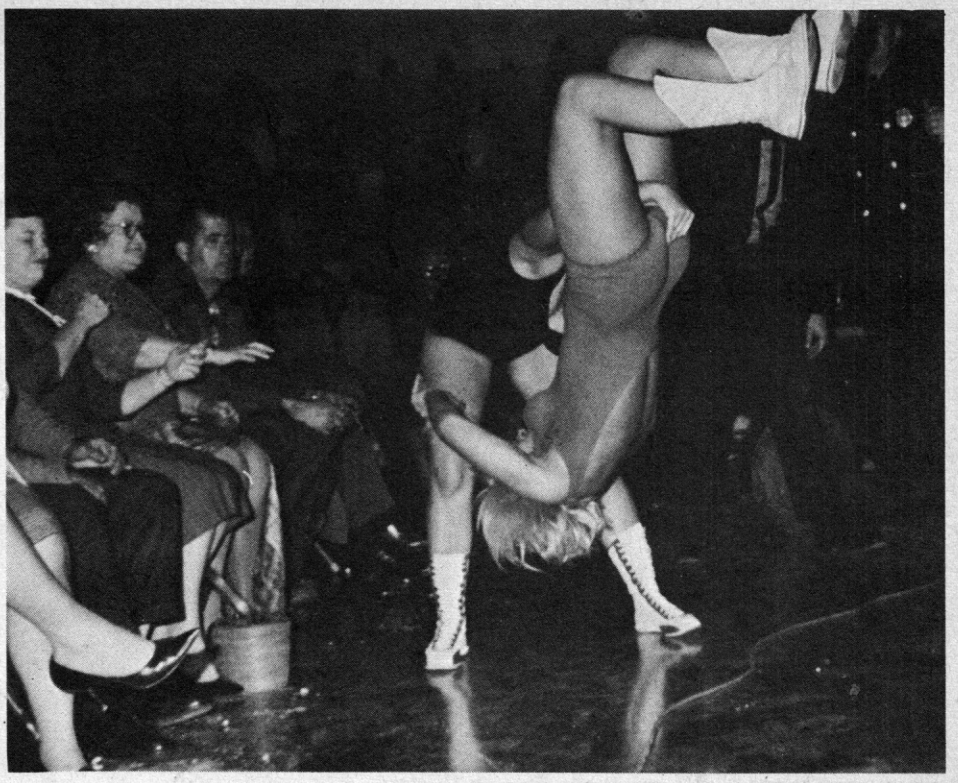
"The next time," Toni says with defiance, "I'll know better. I won't make the same mistakes. "I learned from a good teacher—The Fabulous Moolah—and nothing, but nothing, is going to stop me."

Toni's determination is backed by a violent temper. "I've always had it," she admits. "I guess it comes from my dad's Irish blood. I get awful angry when I'm crossed, but when I get into the ring . . . that's when it boils over."

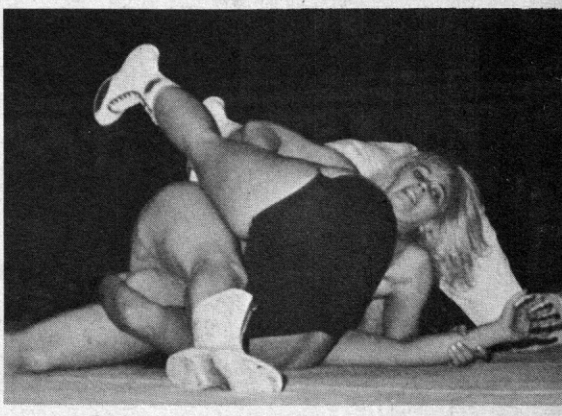
Toni Rose has a pretty smile, a sort of disarming grin. She's deadly serious, though, when she discusses her future.

"Most girl wrestlers last around 10 years, and then they disappear," she says. "Not me. I'm young and tough and, if you want it, I'll pick 32 years old as a stopping point. That gives me 13 good years, and you won't gamble when you put your money on Toni Rose. I'll be champion soon; I'm ready now."

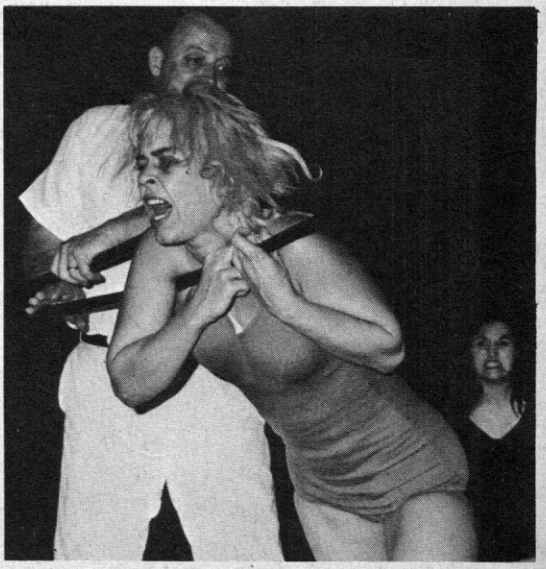
Penny finally relinquished her hold but only after she had flipped Toni over the ropes. Here she moves in to slug Rose while her opponent hangs helplessly.



But Toni was far from through and when the action spilled onto the floor outside the ring, she battered Banner with chops to the midriff, then upended her.



Back in the ring again, Rose struggles to break leg scissors, while referee strains to see if Toni's shoulders are touching mat.



Though she's been wrestling only a short time, Rose knows all the tricks. Here she gets even with Penny by tying her up in the top strands.

Toni Rose has learned well from the great Moolah. She doesn't pull any punches, and her success over the past six months is proof of that.

"I've won a few and lost a few, and I've been disqualified," Toni admits. "Victory is the important thing. The ones I lost have been close, darn close. The disqualifications? I won't talk about them, except to say that Toni Rose gets a raw deal just once. After that, they better watch out."

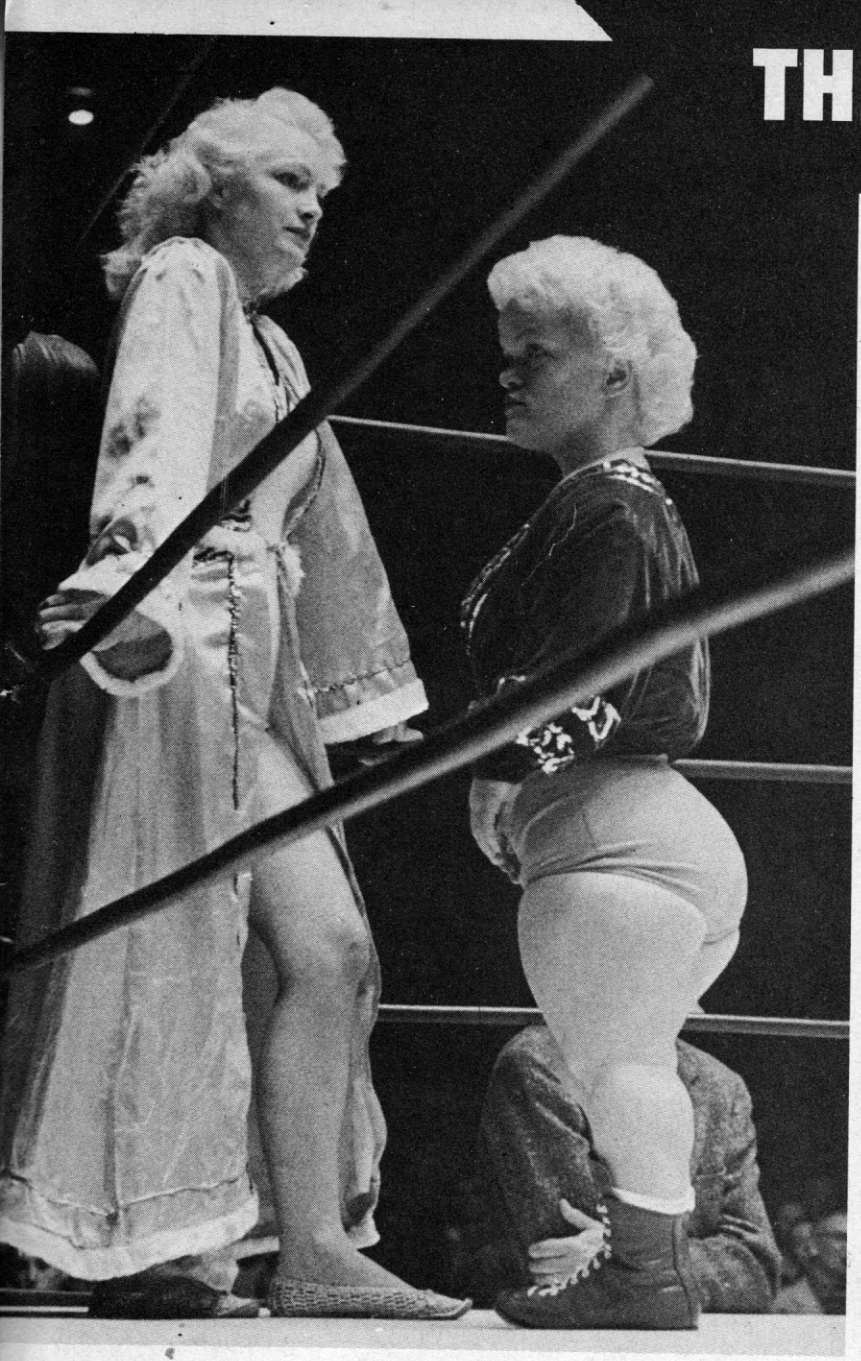
Next stop for teenage terror Toni may be anywhere. She's well-traveled. From North to South. From East to West. And into Canada. It's all the same, the same smiling confidence.

Too, she has her "fans." But Toni discounts them, all of them.

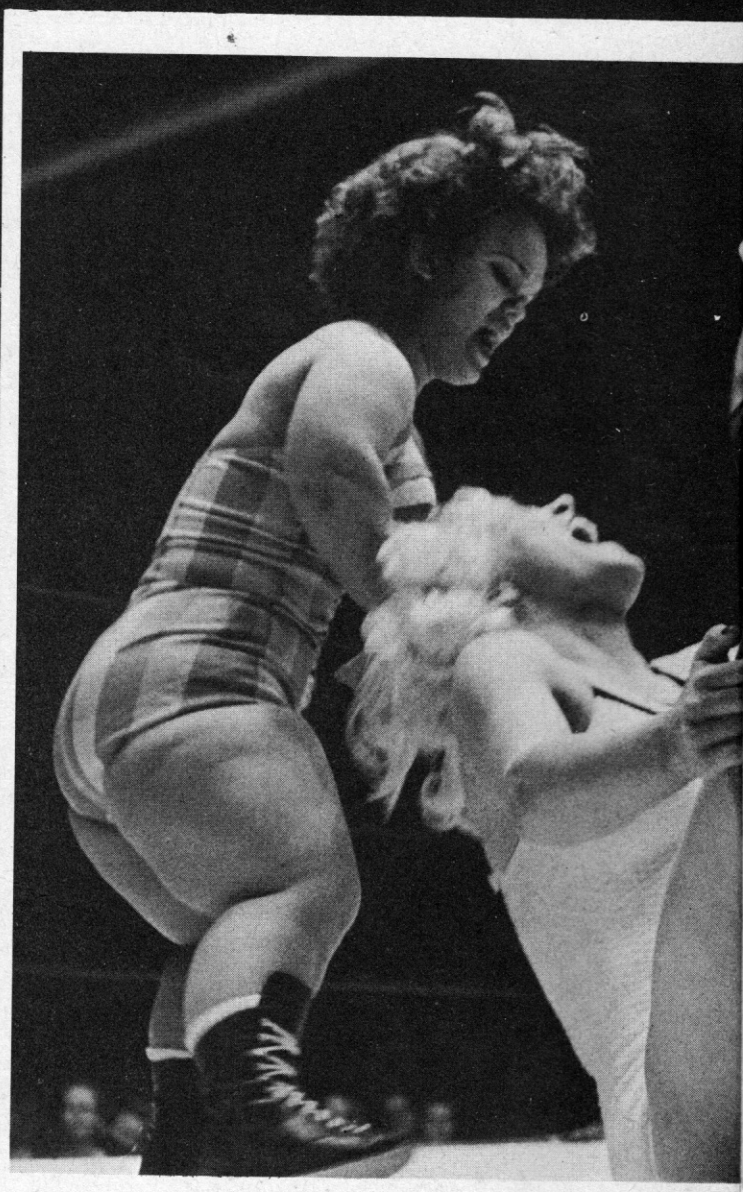
"I don't need anybody. Never did. If some of those so-called fans don't like my tactics, that's

Continued on Page 55

THIS KIND OF MATCH



Awaiting the bell in her corner with Darling Dagmar, lovely Judy Grable looks serenely across the ring at her opponents.



Blonde Judy was busy getting revenge on Cortez for smacking Darling in the snoot when Baby Cheryl, flaunting the

Here's Why...

There have been all kinds of mixed matches in professional wrestling. They have included contests involving men and women, men and midgets—even men versus bears or kangaroos. This is the story of a mixed match featuring lovely, normal-sized women and pixie-ish girls—midgets to you. It took place in Nashville, Tenn., and the uniqueness of the event must have excited public interest because so many people turned out to view it.

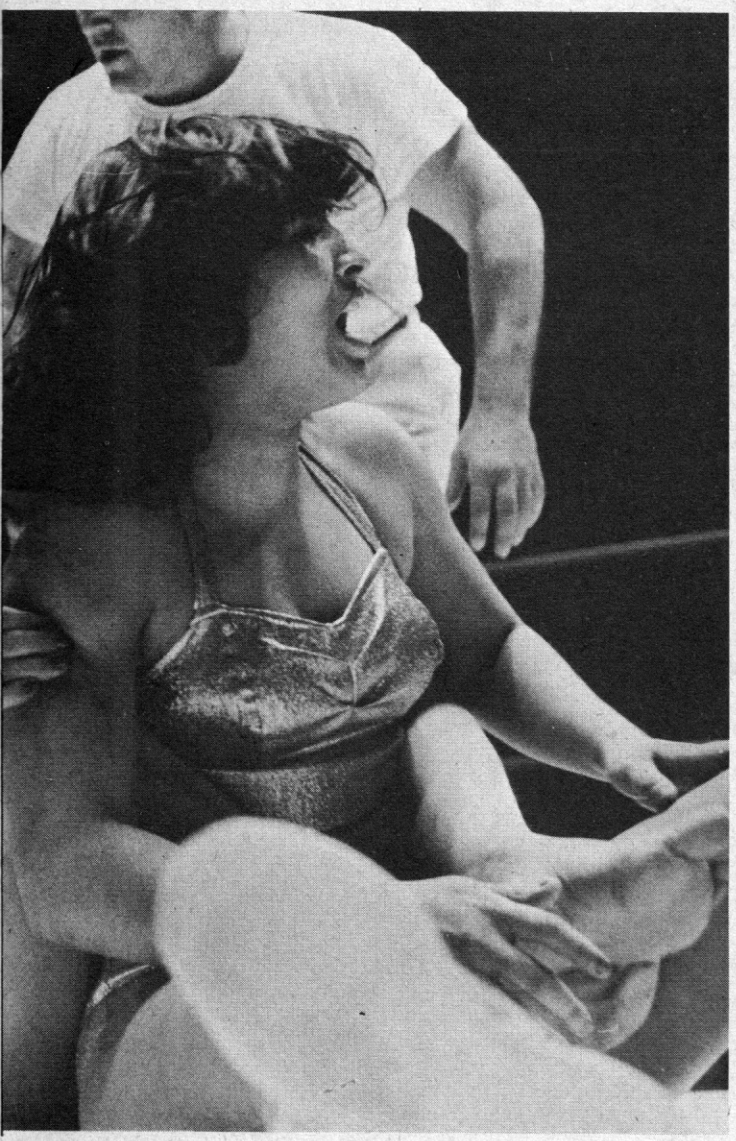
In one corner of the ring stood beautiful platinum blonde Judy Grable. Next to her, coming up to Judy's shoulder, was Darling Dagmar, also a platinum blonde.

In the opposite corner was Rita Cortez, a sexy-looking Mexican brunette whose well-distributed 125 pounds were accentuated by a glittering gold swimsuit. Rita's raven-haired little partner, 88-pound Baby Cheryl, stood alongside her.

Cortez and Grable had wrestled each other many times in single matches, as had Dagmar and Cheryl. But this was something different, and it called for special rules. It was agreed that, as soon as one of the midgets made physical contact with the other, both Grable and Cortez would immediately leave the ring. This was to protect the smaller girls from possible injury.

The crowd's sentiments were immediately won by Grable and

MUST BE BANNED!



rules, dashed to Rita's assistance by yanking on Grable's hair. A moment later, Dagmar smashed Cheryl to the mat.

Sexy Rita Cortez is equally serene but partner Baby Cheryl is prepared for treachery as she glares at Dagmar's back.

Dagmar when, at the opening bell, Cortez dashed from her corner and planted her fist squarely on poor little Darlin' (Dagmar's) snoot.

Judy couldn't believe her eyes. "Why you #%@¢x!" she ranted at the snarling Rita, who by this time had fled back to the security of the corner—with Grable in hot pursuit.

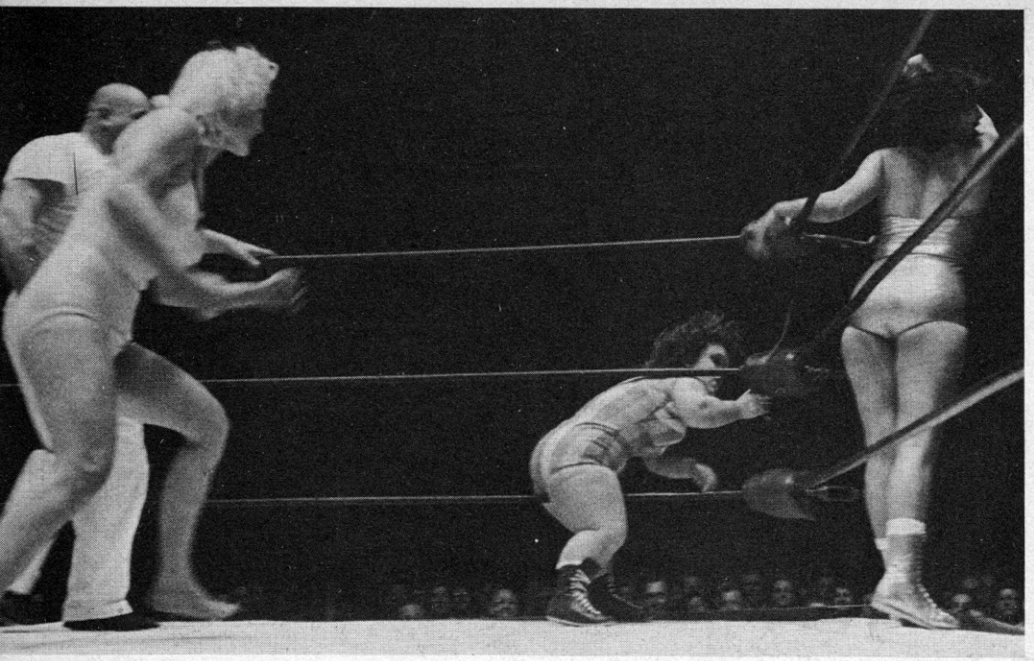
Since it is only natural to sympathize with the "Little Fellow"—beg pardon, "Little Woman" — the crowd got on Cortez with a vengeance. First a paper cup half filled with soda pop swished against Rita's arm and splashed up into her face. While she wiped her eyes, a box of cracker jacks came sailing at her and cracked open against her leg.

Rita fought to retain her composure, but she looked frightened as she surveyed the angry fans who had gathered around the ring, waving their fists and shouting insults,

The tension eased when Dagmar, by now fully recovered from that fist in the snoot, sneaked in under Cortez' line of vision and dug her tiny foot into Rita's shin. When Rita bent over to rub her shin, Dagmar raced behind her and booted her you-know-where. Now everybody in the place was roaring with laughter — except Rita.

What followed was an unusually violent bout—even for tigress Rita Cortez, who completely ignored the special rules and centered her driving attack on the opposing midget. Grable fell into the role of Dagmar's protector, while Baby Cheryl did what she could to harass Grable and Dagmar.

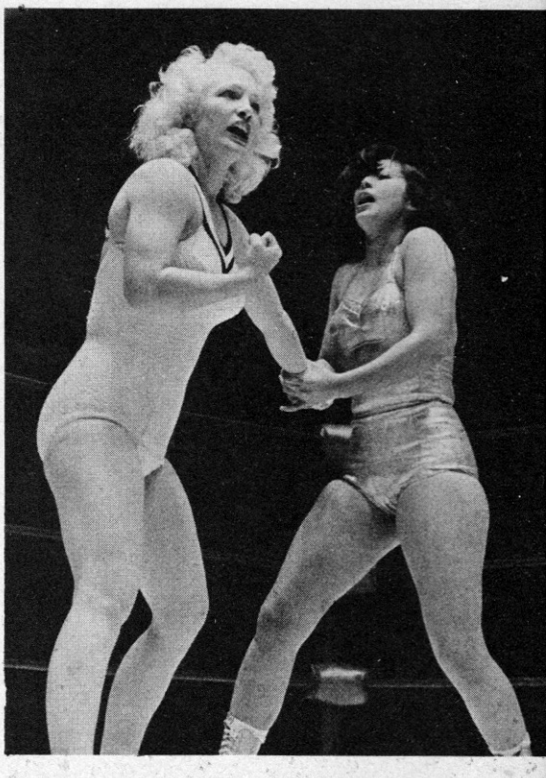
Nashville had never seen anything quite like it before, and it



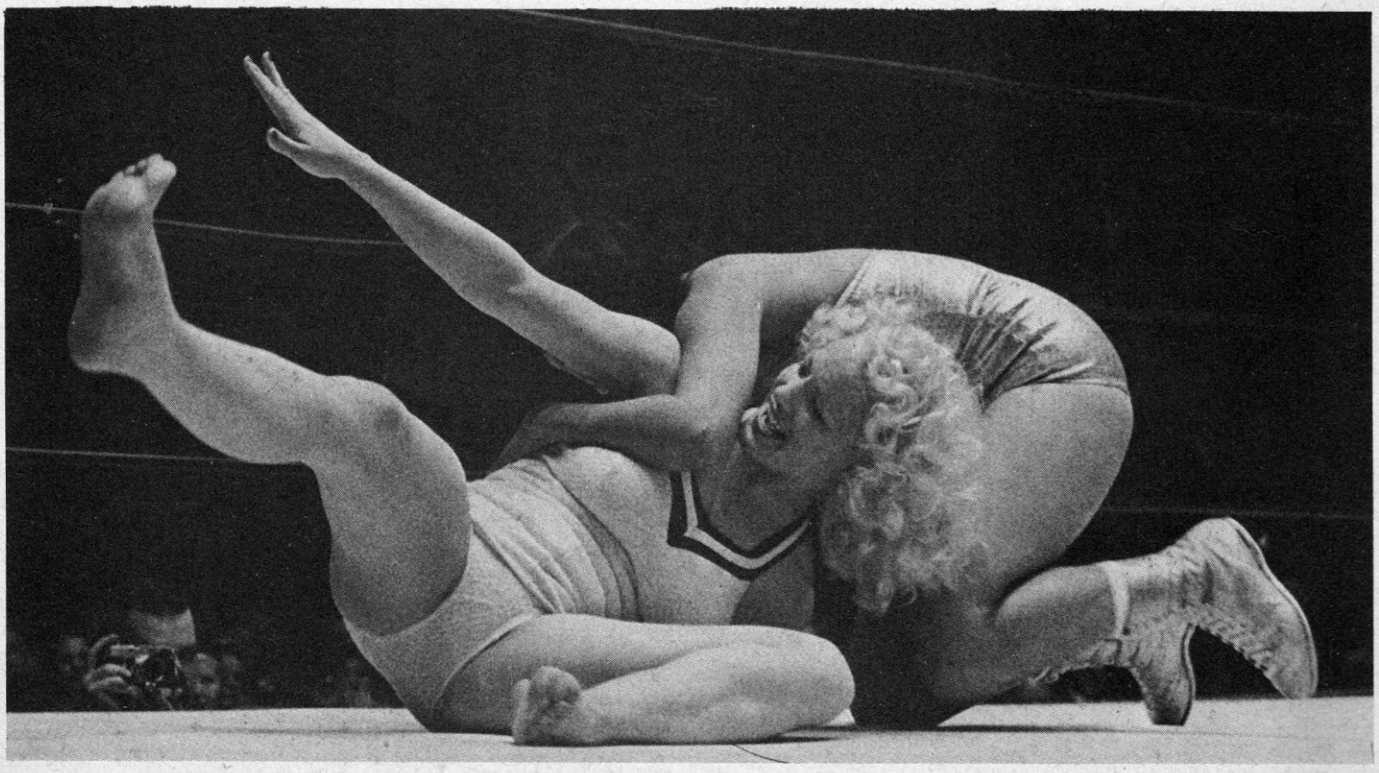
The fans were so incensed by Rita's tactics that they showered her with cracker jacks. Here Cortez shouts insults at the crowd while Cheryl flees from Grable (left).

is doubtful if it ever will again. Perhaps it is for the best, because it wasn't a pleasant or inspiring exhibition. One ringsider summed it this way: "I found the match disgusting. I can't remember seeing more than two legitimate wrestling holds in the entire 32 minutes the match lasted. And when it came to a lack of sportsmanship, this was the championship of the whole world. Disgusting! Absolutely disgusting!"

We agree with that ringsider. Mixed matches such as this one can only hurt wrestling's image, and we hope we never see one again. ■



Attempting to break wrist hold, Grable prepares to wallop Cortez, but referee (out of camera range) warns her that he'll disqualify her if she does.

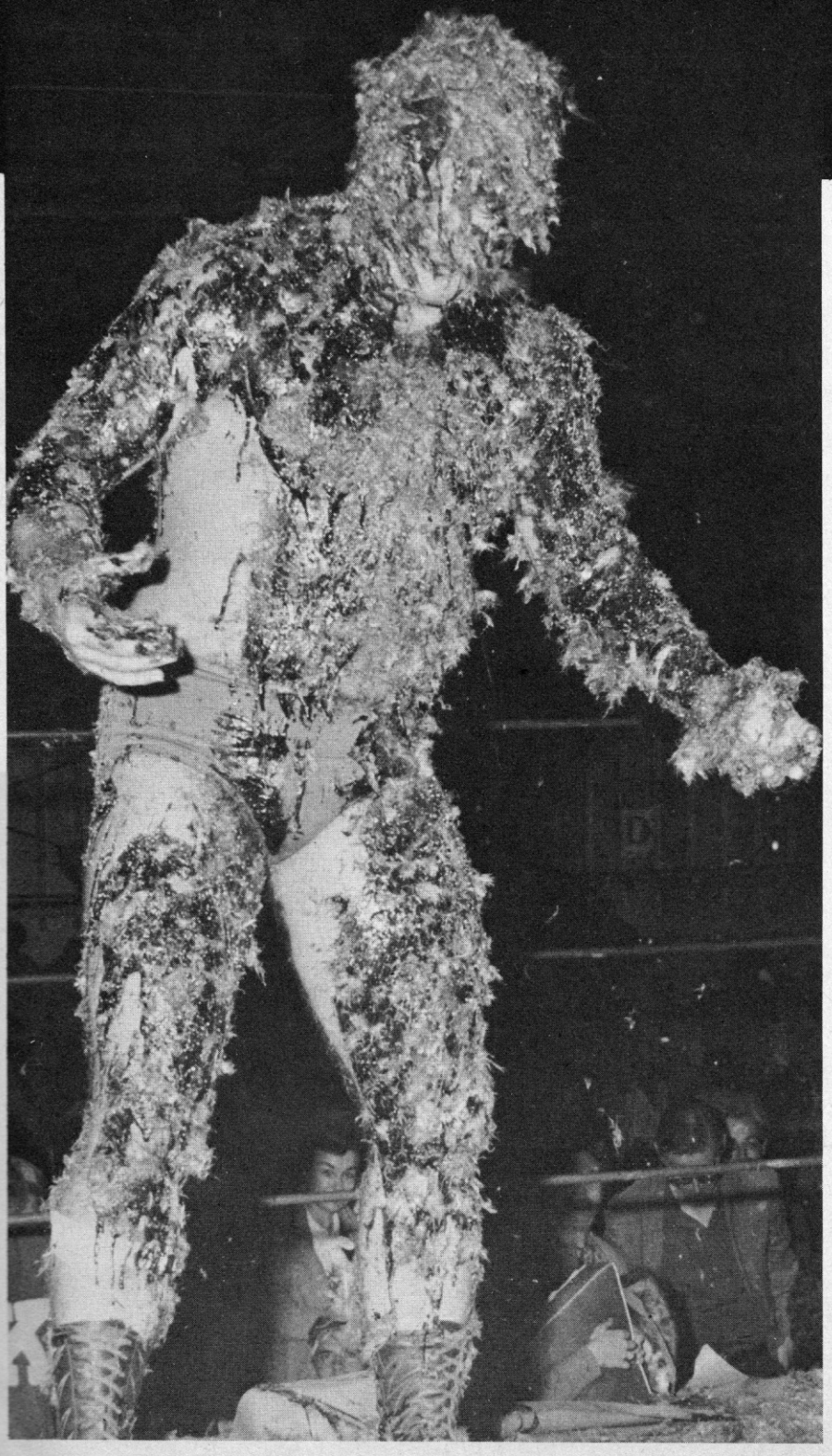


Infuriated by the crowd's taunts, Cortez violated all the special rules as she blasted Grable with chops to the jaw and belly before slamming her to the canvas.

Says Verne Bottoms:

'I Tarred and Feathered My Own Husband...

... Because He Tried to Help Me!'



By NORMAN REED

There isn't a finer man—or husband—in the whole world than my Jack," Verne Bottoms told me recently over a plate of spaghetti in a restaurant in downtown Austin, Texas. "But," she added coldly, "sometimes he gets me real angry."

She didn't have to tell me that. I had seen it with my own eyes an hour and a half earlier. So help me, I've been watching wrestling matches for better than fifteen years but have never seen anything like it before.

It's really hard to describe what happened, which is why I'm glad that so many good pictures were taken of the particular bout I'm referring to. If it weren't for the pictures, I'm sure you'd say, after reading my account, that I belong in a straitjacket.

It happened in the Austin City Coliseum a few months ago. Verne Bottoms was matched against Maria DeLeon in a special grudge match, and it had been agreed beforehand that the loser would hold still while she was being tarred and feathered. And since it was a "Texas Death Match," there had to be a winner.

Photos by TWIN OAKS CAMERA SHOP

"Gee, honey, I'm sorry," Jack Donovan pleads after his wife, in a fit of fury, dumped a bucket of tar over his head.

Verne's husband, Jack Donovan, a well-known wrestler himself, was in her corner, acting as her second.

Verne and Maria whacked each other around for about twenty minutes, with neither having a decided advantage. All the while, Donovan was shouting orders to his wife. Do this! Do that, he shouted.

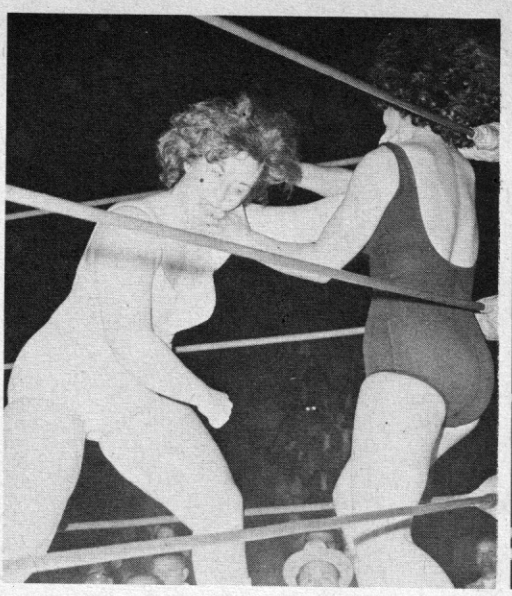
Verne tried to obey, but it was impossible, in the heat of battle, for her to hear everything he said. This angered Jack and several times he waved his hands in disgust and left his position beneath his wife's corner. But he always came back, like a father who would not desert his problem child.

Then it happened. DeLeon was battering Bottoms something awful—tying her in knots with arm and leg locks and then banging away at her face and ribs with vicious combination blows. One right to the head sent Verne flying over the top rope and crashing to the ring apron. DeLeon was on top of her like a hungry vulture, raining punches at various parts of Verne's generous anatomy.

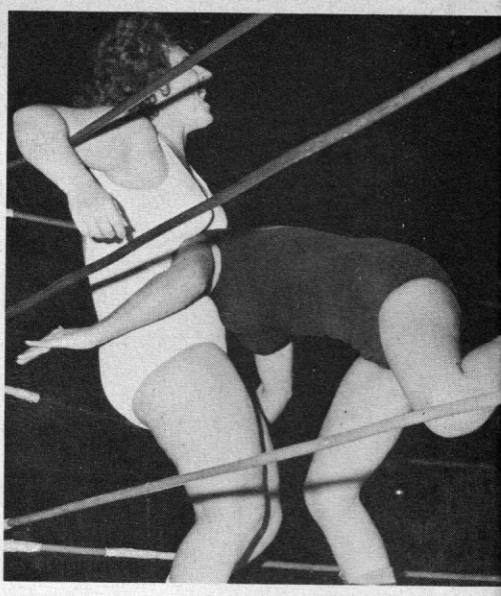
Now Donovan, good husband that he is, could stand it no longer. He raced to the scene of action, took aim at DeLeon's chin, and let go with a left hook.

Maria ducked, and the punch landed straight and true on Verne's jaw.

Jack froze in his tracks, and his wife keeled over as if hit with an anchor. DeLeon, who knows

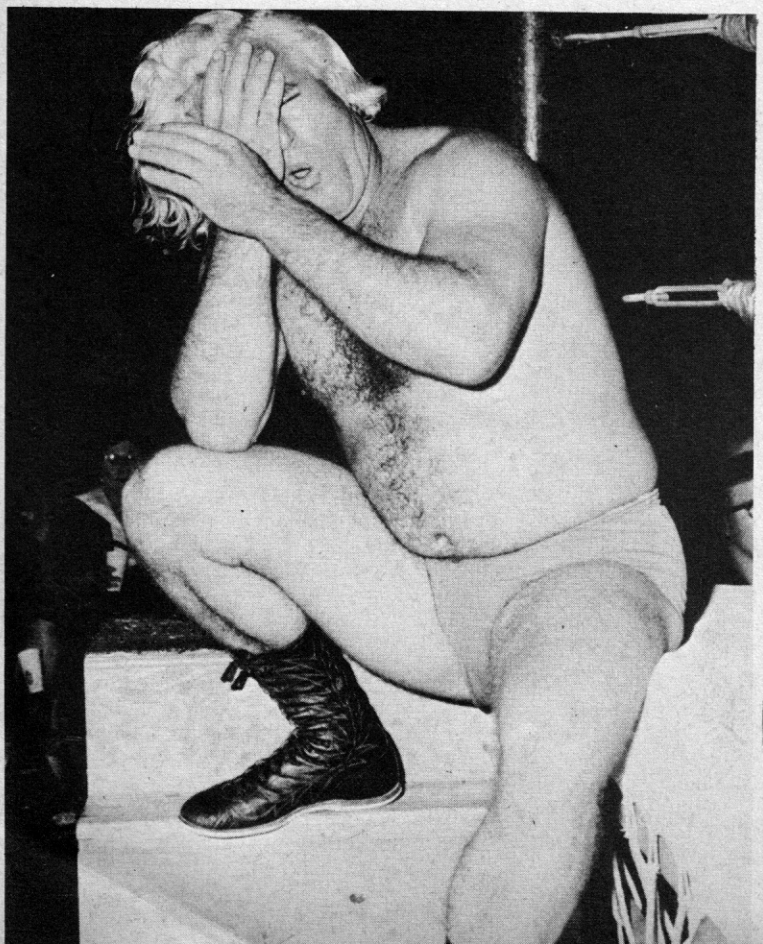


Starting off fast, Verne rams Maria DeLeon into a corner but Maria keeps her at bay.

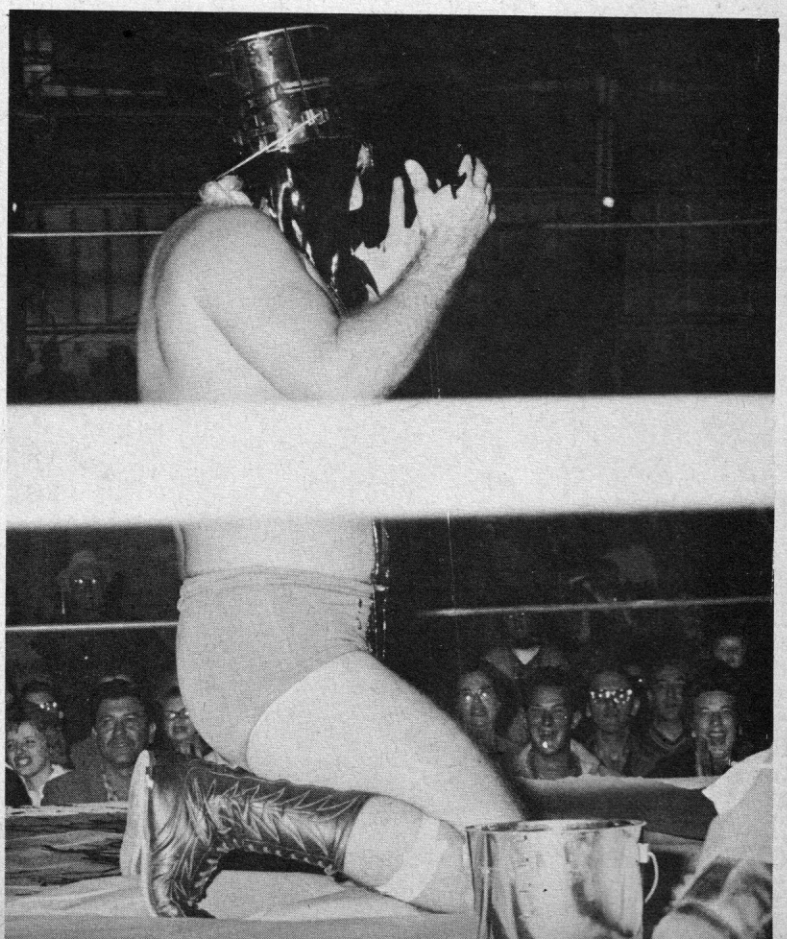


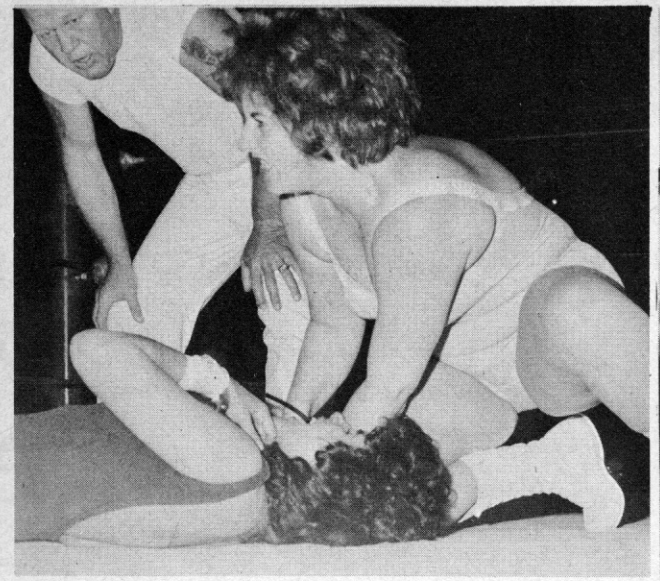
Then Maria swiftly swiveled Bottoms around and knocked the wind out of her.

Rushing in to slug Maria, Donovan punched his wife instead, causing her to lose the match. Here he moans over his mistake.



Then it happened. Verne got so angry over Jack's "stupid mistake" that she dumped the bucket of tar over his head. Donovan didn't know what hit him.





Using her superior weight to advantage, Verne flipped DeLeon and started to strangle her.

That's when the fun began. Maria broke out of the choke hold and slugged Bottoms all over the mat, finally blasting her out of the ring, where she proceeded to hammer her head on the ring apron.

how to take advantage of a golden opportunity, simply fell across Bottom's shoulders to win the match.

Now for the fun. As the loser, Verne was supposed to be tarred and feathered, as per the pre-bout agreement.

Not to be outdone, DeLeon grabbed the slit pillow and sprayed Jack with feathers. Donovan spun around in an effort to ward off the attack. But Maria, egged on by the crowd, wouldn't let him get away and emptied the pillow with one grand flourish.

The bucket of tar was shoved into the ring, as was the big pillow with its ends slit so that the feathers would easily fall out.

When Bottoms recovered, her eyes, filled with hate, froze on her embarrassed husband.

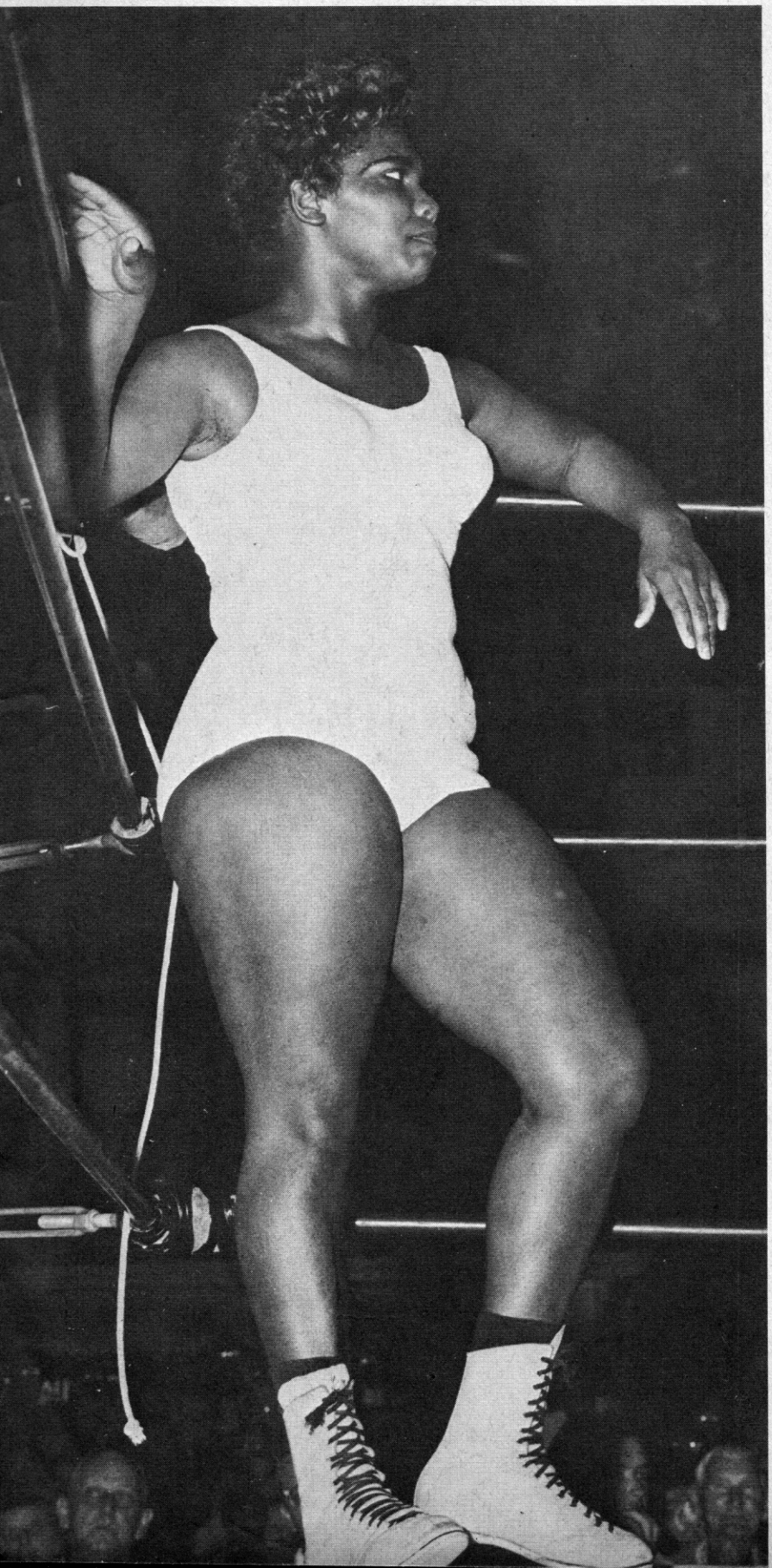
You can easily guess the rest of the story, but if you can't just look at the pictures on these pages. They leave no room for doubt and only go to prove that when you try to help the little woman, all you get is a faceful of . . . tar! ■

Overcome with remorse over what she had done, Verne rushes over to console her husband

BETTY ANN SPENCER, the Girl Who Says . . .

'I'M TOO SEXY FOR ONE MAN!'

. . . Aims Daggers of Hatred at ⟿ ⟿



Her eyes flashing hatred, Betty Ann Spencer leaned against the ropes in her corner and glared at her opponent across the ring.

Sweet Georgia Brown was busy signing her autograph for a flock of moppets. "Sign mine, Georgia!" they clamored. "Sign mine!"

Betty Ann Spencer dug her heel viciously into the mat. "Humph!" she grumbled to herself. "Ain't *nobody* beggin' for *my* autograph. An' I'm better an' prettier than her . . ."

Every so often, Sweet Georgia Brown would stop writing and steal a quick look at Betty Ann. The more Spencer steamed, the more Georgia smiled.

"I knew I had her goat when she kept glaring at the line of kids, four deep, waiting for my autograph," Georgia giggled later.

This was in Tampa, Fla., and Betty Ann, the ex-waitress from Atlanta, Ga., was just itching to prove she could demolish the ex-housemaid from Columbia, S.C.

Earlier, in her dressing room, she'd told a GIRL WRESTLING reporter she had concocted a secret plan to deactivate Georgia. She also told him a lot of other things—especially about what she thought of men.

She wasn't glaring then. She was bubbling with earthy good spirits and crowing, a la Cassius Clay, that "I'm the most beautiful woman in wrestlin' an' you better believe it!"

According to Betty Ann, "The men are all lookin' to marry me, but I don't want no husband. I had one, an' that was enough."

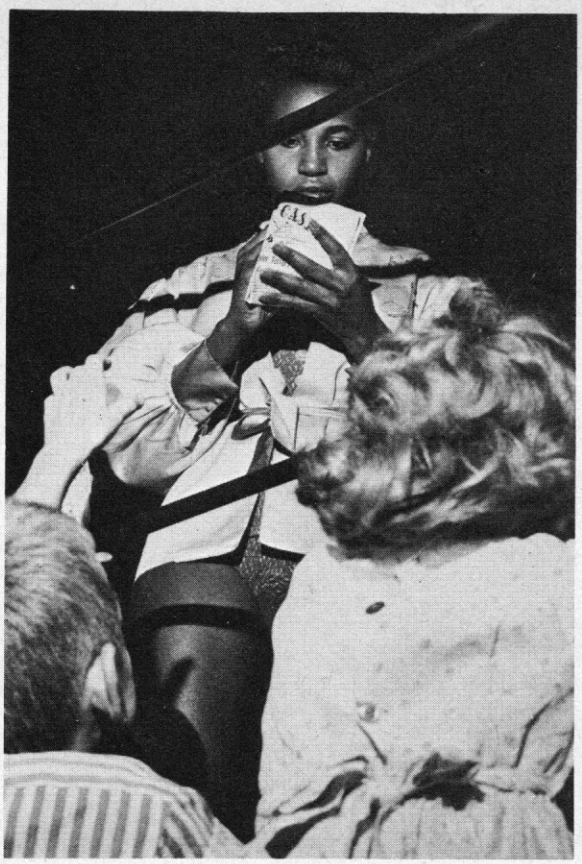
By that, she didn't mean that she had sworn off men. "I'll be honest with you," she confided.

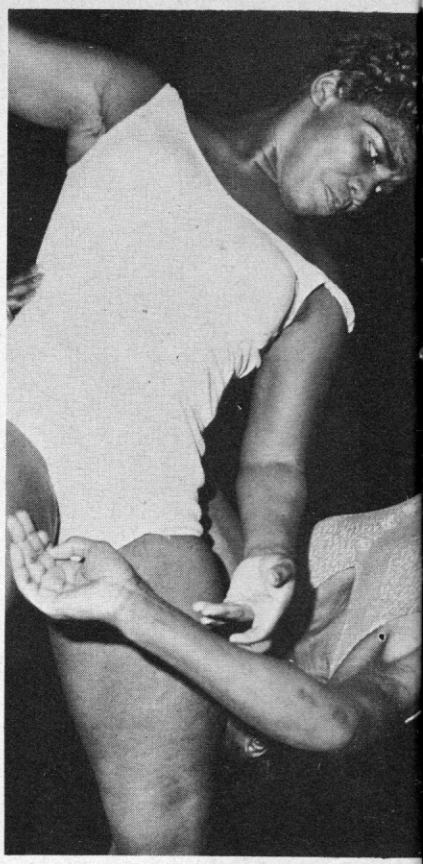
Continued

By DAVE GREGG

Photos by G. ROSS PARSONS

Sweet Georgia Brown





Sweet Georgia Brown is always swamped for autographs by excited fans, particularly younger boys and girls.

"One man was never enough for this girl."

After one look at her curvy 5'5", 145-pound figure, you didn't have to ask her the reason. But Betty Ann volunteered the information, anyway.

"I'm too sexy for any one man," she said, throwing out her chest. "I travel maybe 100,000 miles a year. I don't want a husband always birddoggin' me. A husband ain't practical. I live a roamin' life and I got a rovin' eye. That's the way it is.

"Sure, I keep lookin' for a man, but not a permanent man. I don't trust men, an' no guy better think he's gonna tie me down. I'm lookin' for a man who's just filthy with money 'cause I ain't 'bout to spend any of my loot on nobody but me an' my three kids. I don't want no easy riders. This girl got to be treated good . . . got to be taken out first-class."

You tried to get Betty Ann back on the track, namely, how she planned to beat the Sugar Girl. But she kept right on talking about men:

"Sure I dream 'bout findin' a man I can respect an' look up to . . . a man with money an' good sense an' good looks an' all them things . . . but this pretty woman don't kid herself—not for long, anyhow.

"I know I'll never be satisfied with no man. Where can I find one who'll be able to meet my requirements? I'm more than willin' to check up on all applicants. But I don't really expect none of them to make it. For over a few weeks, anyway . . . that's as long as I'm in any one place . . ."

"But Betty Ann, what about Georgia . . . ?

"Hush up, boy. Like I was sayin', I travel so much, my clothes don't hang up in the closet long enough to cool off. Gotta live in hotels, eat out alla

Continued on Page 55

Betty Ann's Views On:

HERSELF

'I'm the most beautiful woman in wrestlin', an' you better believe it...!'

MEN

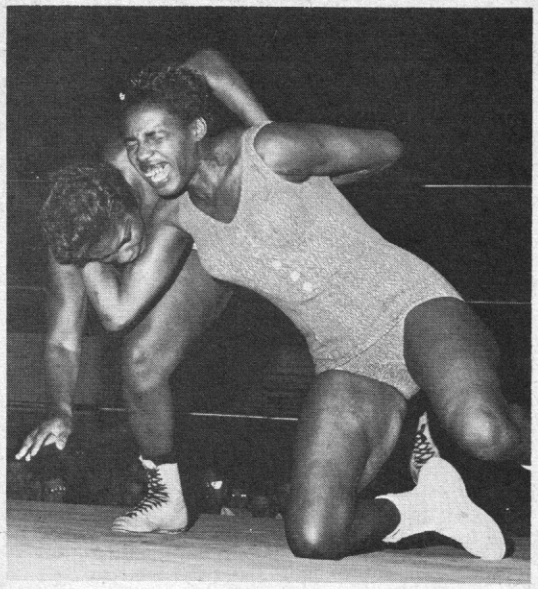
'A husband ain't practical... I live a roamin' life an' I got a rovin' eye...'

LIFE

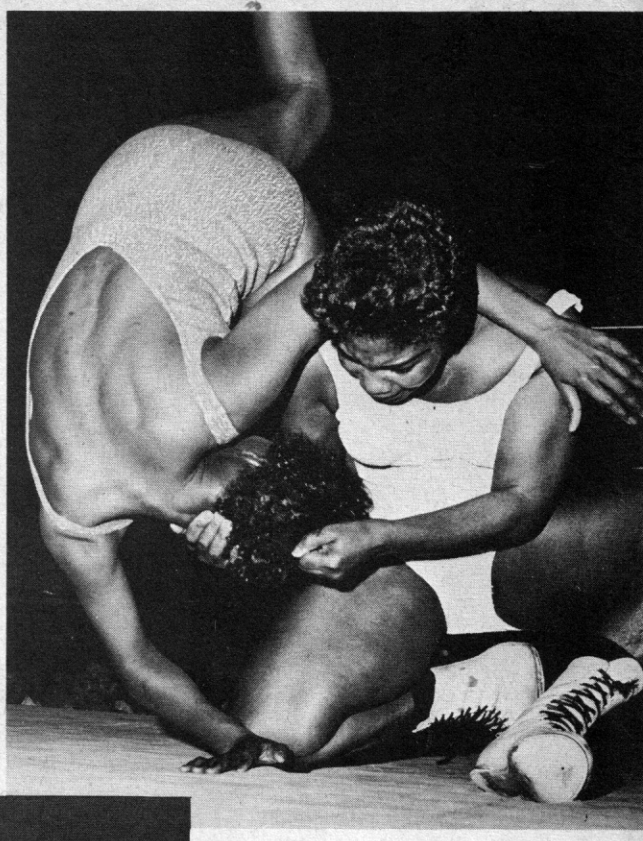
'Wrestlin's just like life—you gotta take what you want...'

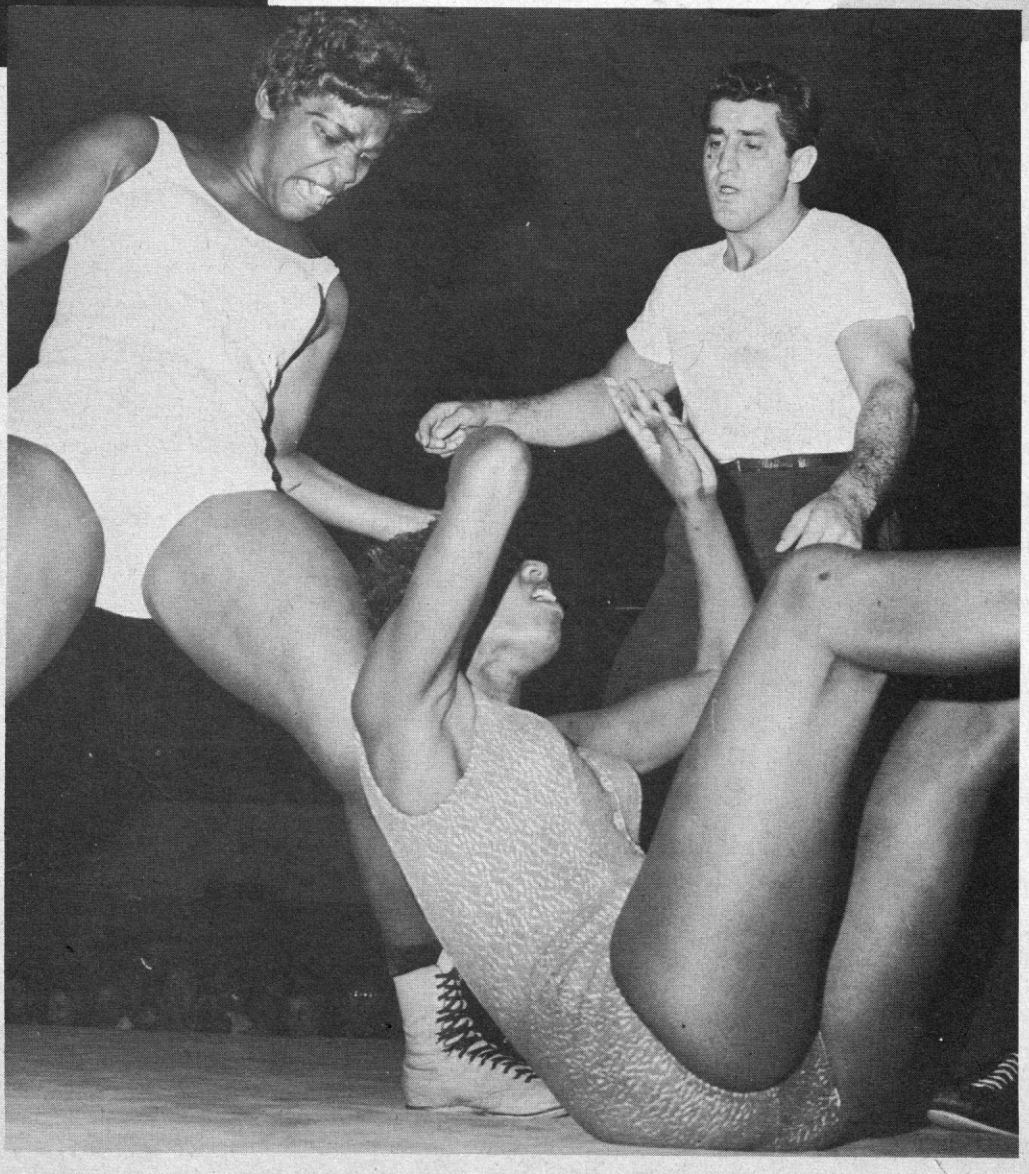
'I don't trust men an' no guy better think he's gonna tie me down...'

Betty Ann Spencer whips Georgia Brown to floor with one heave of her mighty body.



Her face contorted from pain and exertion, Brown uses all her strength to get Spencer in flying mare.





Camera catches Spencer using illegal hair-pulling to bring Sweet Georgia to mat during savage battle in Tampa, Fla.

'Look at me slam that little ol' girl aroun'...'

Sweet Georgia is sent spinning to mat by Spencer's hair-pulling.

By DAVE McMURTRIE

Just Wait Till You See MILLIE!

Promoter Bob Clay scratched his cauliflower ear (it always itches in damp weather) and looked morosely out the ticket booth window. It was one of those cold, gray Missouri days, which fitted Clay's gloomy mood. Tickets for his next wrestling show were moving slowly and Bob was worried.

For want for something better to do, he checked his few advance reservations for the umteenth time. Then he heard a knock on the glass window of the booth and looked up—right into the most gorgeous pair of blue eyes he had ever seen.

"I never saw so intriguingly beautiful a face in my life," Clay said in recalling that incident. "It was a completely different kind of beauty. Not the Hollywood type."

Believing her to be a fan, Bob asked the lovely lady if she wanted to buy a ticket to Friday night's wrestling show.

"No," she said in a deep, sultry voice spiced with a spy-like foreign accent. "I look for boss of wrestling." Clay hesitatingly admitted that he was the boss.

"I wouldn't have been surprised if she had been a process server," Bob told us laughingly. "But when she said she was a wrestler, I nearly fell on my face."

Millie Zec has the kind of body—and face—that makes men whistle. But there is much more to her than mere beauty. She's an ex-European wrestling champion who is now flexing her muscles while waiting to unload against our dainty American stars. The stars—and you—are in for a wow of a surprise

When Clay invited her into his office, he got a look at the body that went with that gorgeous face. "She was about 5-11," Bob recalled, "and weighed around 175. But what a magnificent figure—so beautifully proportioned."

Those proportions, to be specific, are 39-30-39. Check them against last year's Miss America, and you'll have some idea why Bob Clay—and everybody else who ever set eyes on this statuesque hunk of woman—will never forget her.

Her name—Millie Zec—doesn't go with the face and body. It makes you think of a plump, elderly woman in a red babushka sweeping a Moscow street with one of those long-strawed brooms.

Millie Zec brought out the promoter—as well as the man—in Bob Clay. He thought he knew the name of every woman wrestler in the world. But he had never heard of Millie.

He asked if she had had any experience. Struggling to find the right words in English, she explained that she had wrestled often in her native Yugoslavia, and in Italy and Germany.

"I was born in little village name of Gnilane," she said slowly. "Place small—only thirty families in village."

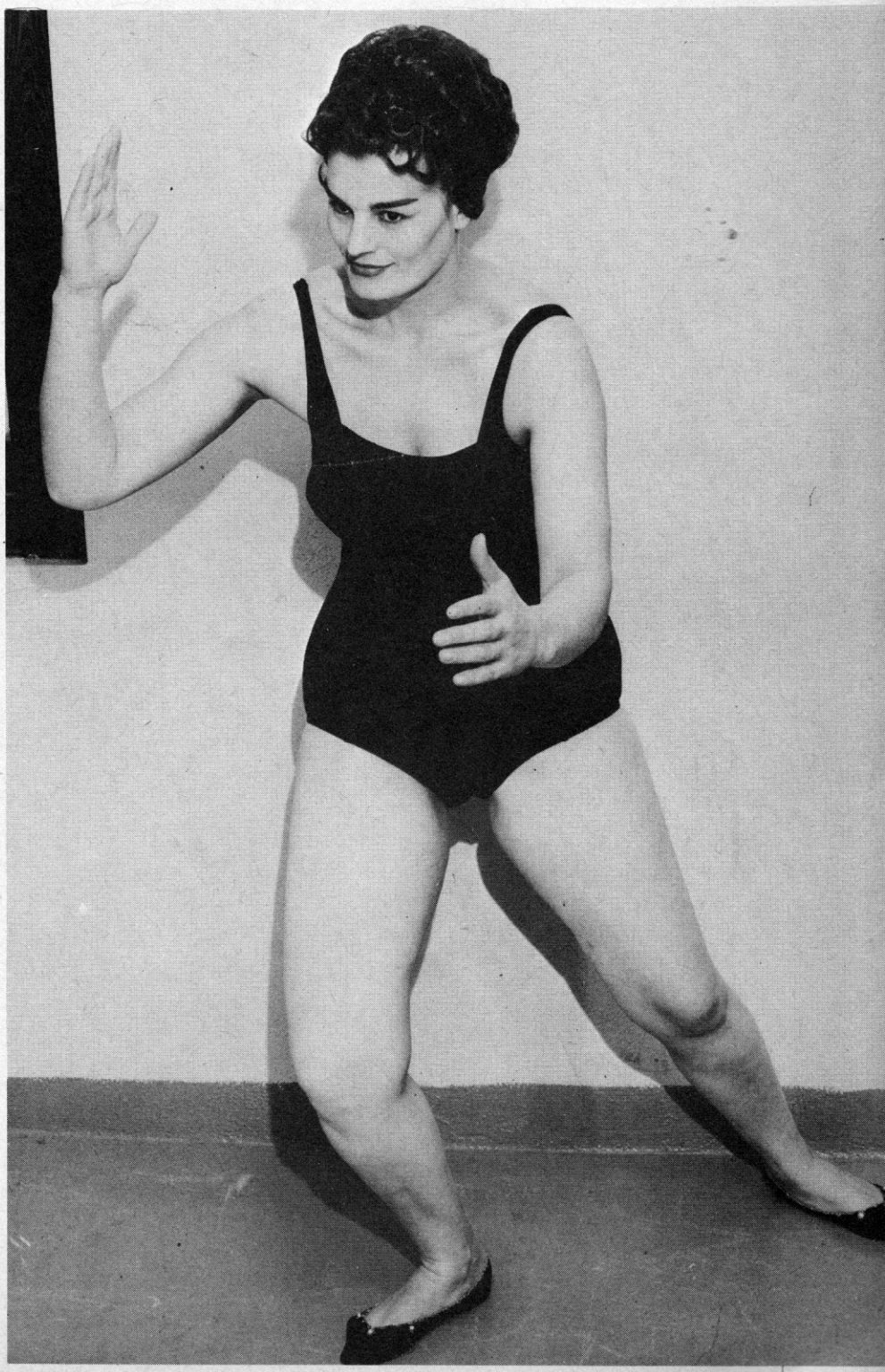
Millie said that both her parents were high school teachers, and that she was born Milica Cveticanin on September 20, 1935. "Zec my married name," she said.

Millie didn't have to tell Bob Clay that she was athletically inclined. But she did anyway. She told Clay about her running and swimming feats, how she played basketball in high school and would have played soccer had they let her.

She recalled the day at Socoland Arena in Belgrade about seven years ago when she first saw girls wrestle. "I never know such things happen," she said, her coal black eyes widening like saucers.

Millie made it her business to meet the bossman of Yugoslavian girl wrestling—if he can be called that. He turned out to be an ex-champion named Duscan Nicolic.

Reading between Millie's fractured words, it was obvious that



Says Bob Clay: 'When this sultry beauty told me she was a wrestler, I nearly fell on my face...'

Nicolic liked Millie, which makes us respect his judgment. Under his guidance, she went on to win the amateur championship of Yugoslavia. "I want to be professional," she said, "right after I am amateur champion."

But at this point her father stepped in. Being an amateur was one thing—it's good exercise—but to wrestle for a living! No, papa wouldn't hear of it. There were arguments and Millie threatened to leave home. Finally they made a deal: papa would not object to her becoming a professional wrestler if she agreed to finish college first.

Papa believed that Millie would forget her whim by the time she graduated, but she fooled him. She was more eager than ever to wrestle. And she did.

"I have many good bouts," she said, "but I no make much money. It fun, though, and I travel and meet many fine people."

During her wrestling years in Europe, Millie married her boyhood sweetheart, who was studying law. She explained that he was not happy, politically, in Yugoslavia, and decided to move to Italy. During their stay in Italy, Millie's charms were discovered by the famed movie producer Dino DiLaurentiis. Now Signor DiLaurentiis knows a beauty when he sees one, as he proved when he chose the lovely actress, Silvana Mangano, to be his bride.

The producer wanted Millie to play a part in his movie, *Jovanka,* which was released in the United States under the title *Five Branded Women.* It is a World War II story about five Yugoslavian women who give their charms to Nazi soldiers and who wind up having their heads shaven clean by the villagers.

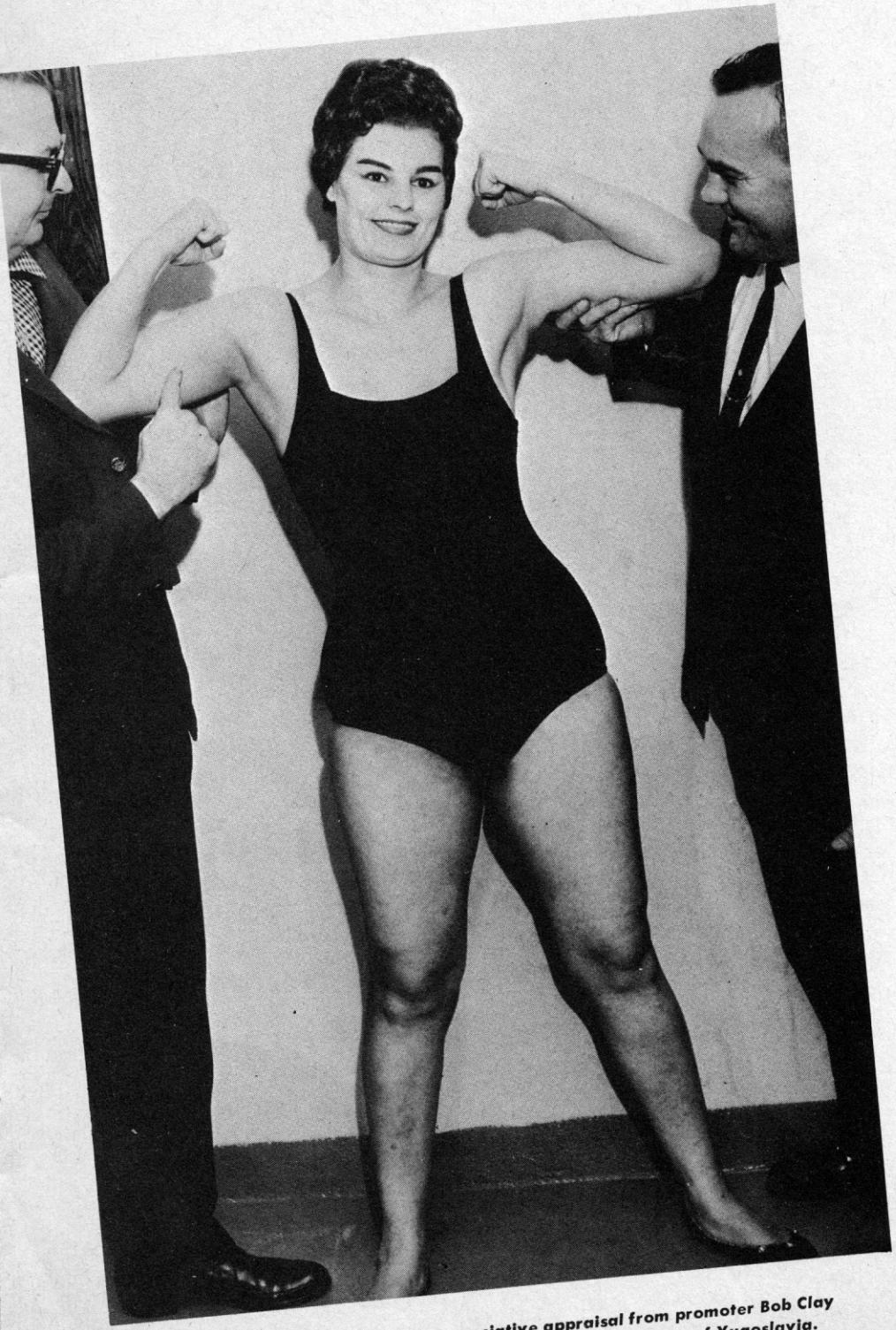
"I see DiLaurentiis cry like a baby when they shave his wife's head," recalled Millie. "But he do anything for art."

'... But when I felt her powerful muscles, I knew she wasn't kidding'

Millie didn't get a part in the picture because she was a political refugee and the Italian government would not give her the required working papers. But Millie had other things to do at the time—like having her first child, which was born while she and her husband were in the refugee camp.

"When pains start," said Millie, "woman bring me a pan of water and then go away. In Yugoslavia, woman have baby with no help from doctor, and she go back to work next day. I see Maria born (she's seven years old now) and I do my work next day."

Millie Zec is that kind of woman. She comes from the same sturdy stock as those hearty souls who pioneered the great American West more than a century ago, and who worked 15 hours a day in sweatshops and iron mills to make America the industrial giant she is today. Millie Zec isn't afraid to dirty her hands. If she had to, she'd mine coal or work in a slaughterhouse. When it comes to work, she puts herself on the same level as men.



Millie's 39-30-39 figure gets appreciative appraisal from promoter Bob Clay (right) and a local sportswriter. Millie was amateur champ of Yugoslavia.

On October 3, 1961, Millie, her husband and their daughter climbed out of an Alitalia jet airliner after crossing the ocean from Rome to New York. From New York they proceeded to St. Louis, where her husband had relatives. Two days after they arrived, Millie had her second child, a boy they named Joban.

She got a job at the Cordage Mill, making rope. "I feel at home in mill," she said, "because everybody there from Yugoslavia."

It was in St. Louis where Millie started to notice the stylishness of American women. "I never use red paint on my lips," she said, "or blue paint on my eyes. I like dresses Americans wear."

But what impressed her most was the way American women wore their hair: teased high atop their heads. Millie, according to European tradition, had always worn her hair long ("it hang down to my hips"). But she had it cut short and teased.

With her new hair style, and the red paint on her lips and blue paint accentuating the beauty of her eyes, Millie looked like a brunette Maureen O'Hara—startling enough to make people stop and stare at her.

One day, Millie noticed the picture of a wrestler in a St. Louis newspaper. It excited her—and it also gave her ideas. A friend translated the advertisement. It told about a big, all-star wrestling show Friday night at Kiel Auditorium. Millie asked her husband to take her. He refused. Angered, she told him that she wanted to wrestle again. This infuriated him, according to Millie. "He say, 'When you go from my house, you can wrestle.' "

She must have wanted to return to wrestling awfully bad because she left her husband's bed and board and filed for divorce.

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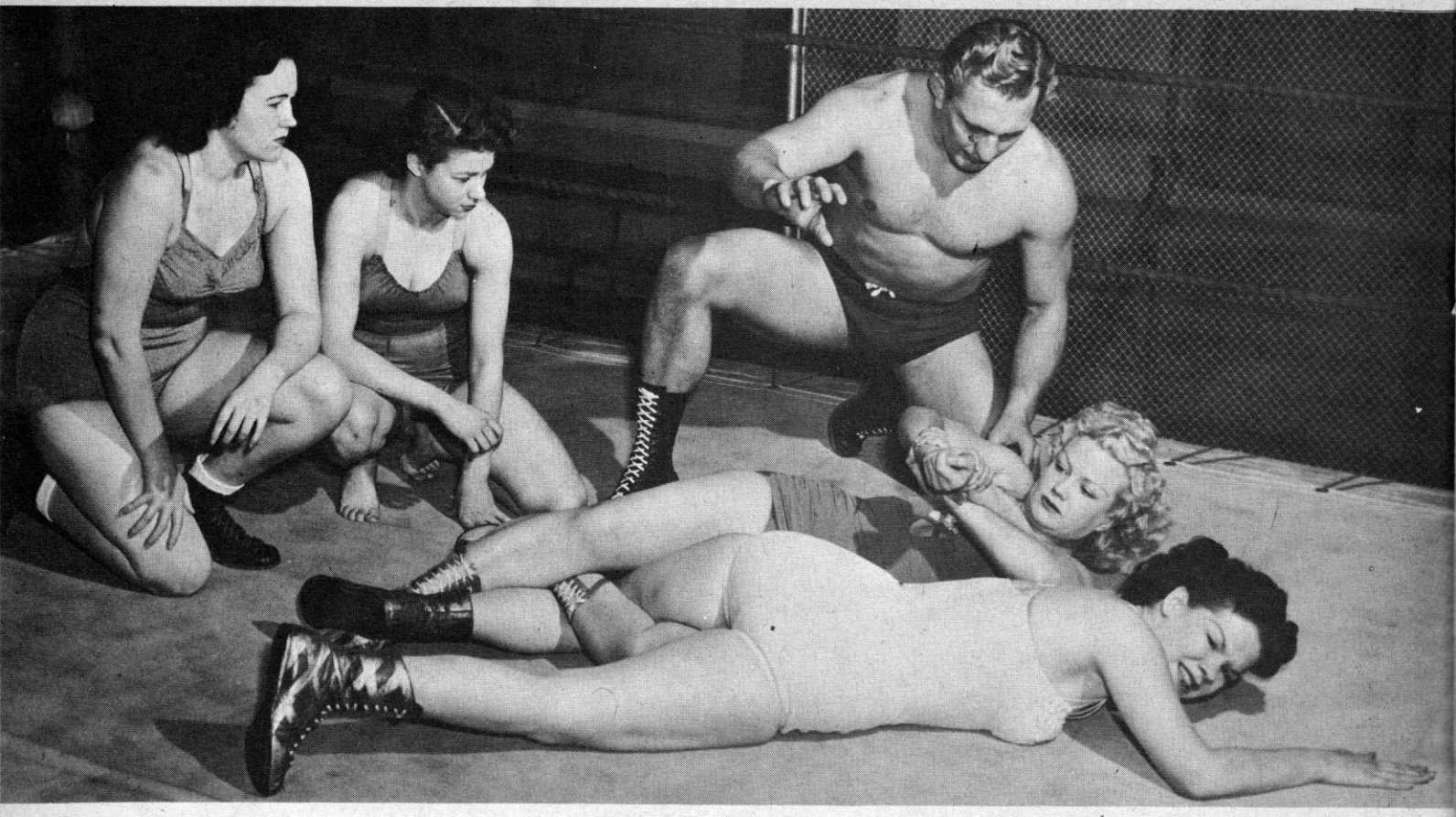


Rogers gives pointers as blonde Nell Stewart and Betty Hawkins demonstrate tricky hold for benefit of two young wrestling prospects. "If you can master this hold," Buddy told the girls, "you'll win many matches."

LESSON FROM BUDDY

One summer day in 1953, Buddy Rogers picked up the phone in his home on the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio.

"Buddy," the high-pitched voice on the other end of the line began, "what are you doing this afternoon?"

Before Rogers could answer, the voice continued, "It will only take a few hours of your time, and it will mean a lot to me."

"For you," Buddy told his old friend Billy Wolfe, "you can have my whole day. What's up?"

Wolfe, who was to girl wrestling what Henry Ford is to the automobile business, quickly explained that he was having some trouble with a couple of new girls who needed "some inspiration." Then Wolfe said, "I'll tell you all about it when I see you. Try to be at the gym by half past two."

Rogers arrived five minutes early and Billy greeted him at the door. He threw his arm around Buddy's broad shoulders and escorted him upstairs into the main part of the gym.

Wolfe pointed to the ring in the center of the room where four rather husky young girls stood talking. When they saw Billy, they split into pairs and started throwing headlocks on each other.

Billy winked at Rogers. "See? As soon as I turn my back, they dog it." The famous manager slapped his hands together and yelled, "Break a sweat, girls! It's not a workout unless you sweat bullets. That's it, Nell, now take her down with the weight of your own body."

Nell Stewart followed orders and, with a neat twist of her curvy body, sent the dark-haired girl whirling across the ring.

Rogers, who had known Nell Stewart for years, started to applaud. "Neat, Nell!" he shouted. "That's the way to do it."

Lovely Nell, her blonde hair hanging down over her big, blue eyes, straightened up to her full 5 feet 6 inches, recognized Rogers, and quickly scampered over to him. As she threw her arms around him, he picked her up, hugged her and swung her around like a proud father who has been greeted by his little girl on arriving home from work.

"Nell! Nell!" Rogers gushed. "Still the prettiest of them all."

"Still full of the old blarney," she said.

Wolfe watched the happy reunion patiently, then broke in, "When you two get finished loving each other, maybe we can get down to business."

It was Nell who quickly briefed Rogers about why Billy had asked his help.

She pointed at the two girls in

the ring. "Look at them, Buddy," Stewart began. "They're a couple of young kids who show a lot of promise. Billy thinks so. So do I. They're strong and fast and they have guts. We can make something of them if . . ."

Wolfe cut Nell off. "What Nell is trying to tell you, Buddy, is that we have all the raw material we need in those two kids. Now all we have to do is give them the incentive."

Rogers listened intently. Then, with a puzzled look, asked, "That's great, kids, but what can I do about it?"

"Just your being here to watch them work out can make the difference between success and failure," Wolfe said. "It's like having the President of the United States drop into the office of a junior Senator. Think of how proud the Senator would be. Why it would be something he'd never forget as long as he lived. Your presence here should have the same effect on those two girls."

Buddy looked at Nell Stewart and smiled broadly. "How do you like that, Nell? Billy is comparing me to the President of the United States."

The famous wrestler paused, then said, "I'm going to go you kids one better. I have some of my wrestling gear in the locker downstairs. Let me sneak out and I'll be back in a few minutes."

A few minutes later, Wolfe introduced Buddy to the two young girls in the ring. Rogers wore dark green trunks, which contrasted with his blond hair.

The girls were so thrilled their words froze in their mouths. Rogers tried to relax them. "Let's see if I can show you a few tricks that might substitute for experience. It's not difficult. Just wait and see how easy it is."

Wolfe and Nell Stewart stepped to a corner of the ring and Buddy asked the shorter of the new girls to come out to the center of the mat.

Towering over the sloe-eyed brunette, Rogers placed his hand on the girl's shoulder. "Honey," he said, "the first thing to fix in your head so firmly that you'll never forget it is that you must always keep your poise when you're in the ring. Even if you feel like busting out crying and running back to the dressing room, never let your opponent know it. Always act confident; stick out your chest and learn to keep a sugary smirk on your face. You'd be amazed how much a smirk can upset your opponent."

Buddy then told the girl to take a firm hold of his wrist. "Now try to pull me off balance. Don't be afraid, yank hard as you can."

"Go ahead, girl. Do what Buddy said," Billy Wolfe shouted.

Finally she took hold of Rogers' big mitt, slowly, gently. Buddy grinned, "Oh come now, honey, don't be afraid. Grab my hand like you want to pull it off."

She did, and Rogers' 230 pounds bolted forward. He ground to a stop about six feet behind the girl and when he walked back to where she stood there was surprise on his face.

"You pack a lot of power, honey," he said. "A lot of power."

As Rogers carefully explained the basic holds and theories of professional wrestling, the girl lost her timidness and began to enjoy her unexpected adventure.

While all this was going on, Rogers made the other of Billy Wolfe's new discoveries feel important by directing most of what he said at her. When he demonstrated a hold on the shorter girl, he would look at the other one and say, "Notice the position of my feet and the way I turn the arm inward . . ."

Nell Stewart cracked, "Say, Buddy, I've been in this business about seven years and I never knew most of those things. Man, could I have used a lesson like this when I was breaking in."

"Quit your kidding," the great man quipped, "you invented this stuff."

Everybody in the small gymnasium burst out laughing. Then Rogers said, "Come on out here, Nell, and let's show these kids a few tricks."

The shapely blonde star dashed out as if answering the bell for a title match and quickly slapped a headlock on Rogers. He grunted and groaned (kiddingly, of course) then picked Stewart up and gently took her to the mat. But she still held the headlock. The two young girls started to applaud and cheer but Billy Wolfe, fearing that his star attraction might accidentally pull a ligament or wrench an arm, yelled, "Cut it out before somebody gets hurt!"

"I won't get hurt," Rogers cracked as he grabbed for Stewart's lovely leg.

"I'm not worried about you, you big lug, and you know it," Wolfe growled. "Now cut it out! Come on, Nell, get away from him."

The session lasted about an hour and a half, then Rogers had to leave. "I really would like to stay with you kids longer, but I've got to get on the road. It's a 90-mile drive to where I'm wrestling tonight."

Buddy kissed his old friend Nell Stewart and then, with Billy Wolfe at his side, walked downstairs to change clothes.

"Well, what do you think of them?" Wolfe asked.

"Oh, you can't tell much at this point, Billy," Buddy said. "You know that. They're pretty strong and they can be brought along—with plenty of work. Why not let Nell work with them?"

"She hasn't time," Billy said.

"I'll do what I can to help," Rogers volunteered, "but I don't have much time either."

Wolfe, who was a great middleweight wrestler in his day, slapped him on the back. "You know," Billy said, "I have a hunch that just seeing you this afternoon did more good for those kids than all the wrestling lessons in the world. They can always be taught how to get a headlock and a hammerlock, but spirit and inspiration—ah, these things cannot be taught. You must either be born with them or they must be planted in you."

Rogers chuckled, "Planted is the right word all right, and I'm a pretty good gardener."

We wish we could end this story by reporting that the two young girls Buddy Rogers helped in that Columbus, Ohio, gymnasium long ago went on to become champions. But it didn't work out that way. Neither of them ever became good enough to advance out of the preliminary class and within six months, both quit wrestling for good. ■

'I Could

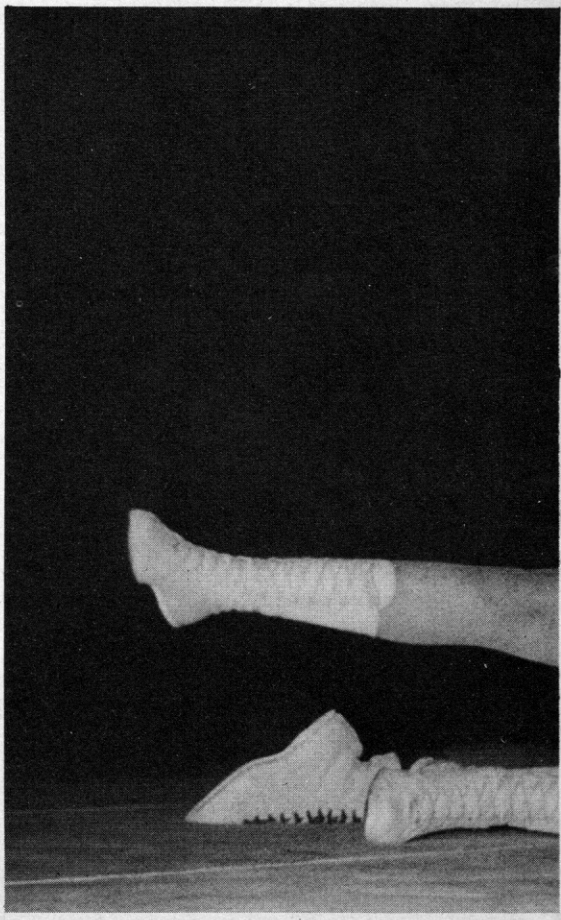
By ED LAVER

Hey, mister, you wanna see my ma? She's right there—in that little room, all by herself."

Without a doubt, I had come face to face with the youngest, liveliest and most enterprising publicity agent in professional wrestling. Or, for that matter, anywhere.

His name was Larry, and he was eight years old, with straight, sandy blond hair matted over his suntanned forehead. The first thing you noticed about him was his exuberance.

Tagging behind him was a little girl, hugging her flash Brownie camera. She wanted to take a picture of Larry's mom, but he told her she would have to wait.



Kiss All the Fans...'

That's what Ann Casey feels like doing when she achieves what she calls 'my finest moment'

Larry ducked into his mother's dressing room and, emerging a moment later, told me: "Mom'll see you now."

I had to marvel at the way he handled things. Man, what a future this little guy had! The original Sammy, galloping . . .

I knocked twice on Ann Casey's door and heard a soft, musical voice say: "Come in, please."

Ann was trying on a new costume—a white, low-necked job that highlighted every curve in her magnificent body.

"I'll be with you in just a minute," she smiled, combing her raven hair before a tiny mirror. When she had finished, she smiled again, looking just like the kind of girl you'd like to take home to mother—if you could trust dad.

"I've just returned after a year in Hawaii," Ann said, "and it's so good to get back home . . ."

The door opened and Larry interrupted: "Mom, can this girl take a picture of you now?"

"Not yet, son," Ann said. "I'll let you know when I'm ready."

"Okay, mom."

As the door closed, Casey turned to me and said with a grin: "Best press agent I've ever had."

Not that Ann Casey needs a press agent. In her three-year career, the 5'8", 140-pound beauty has enjoyed enormous popularity and has beaten every big name opponent you can think of—except one.

Ann has pinned Kathy Starr, Brenda Scott, Judy Glover and Judy Grable, among others, but thus far she has been unable to add Fabulous Moolah to her list.

Now that she is back in the States, this is her primary goal. "I know I've got my work cut out for me," she said. "Moolah's got so many tricks up her sleeve, it isn't even funny. I've wrestled her before, and believe me when I tell you that I remember every second of what happened. Golly, she did everything to me short of murder."

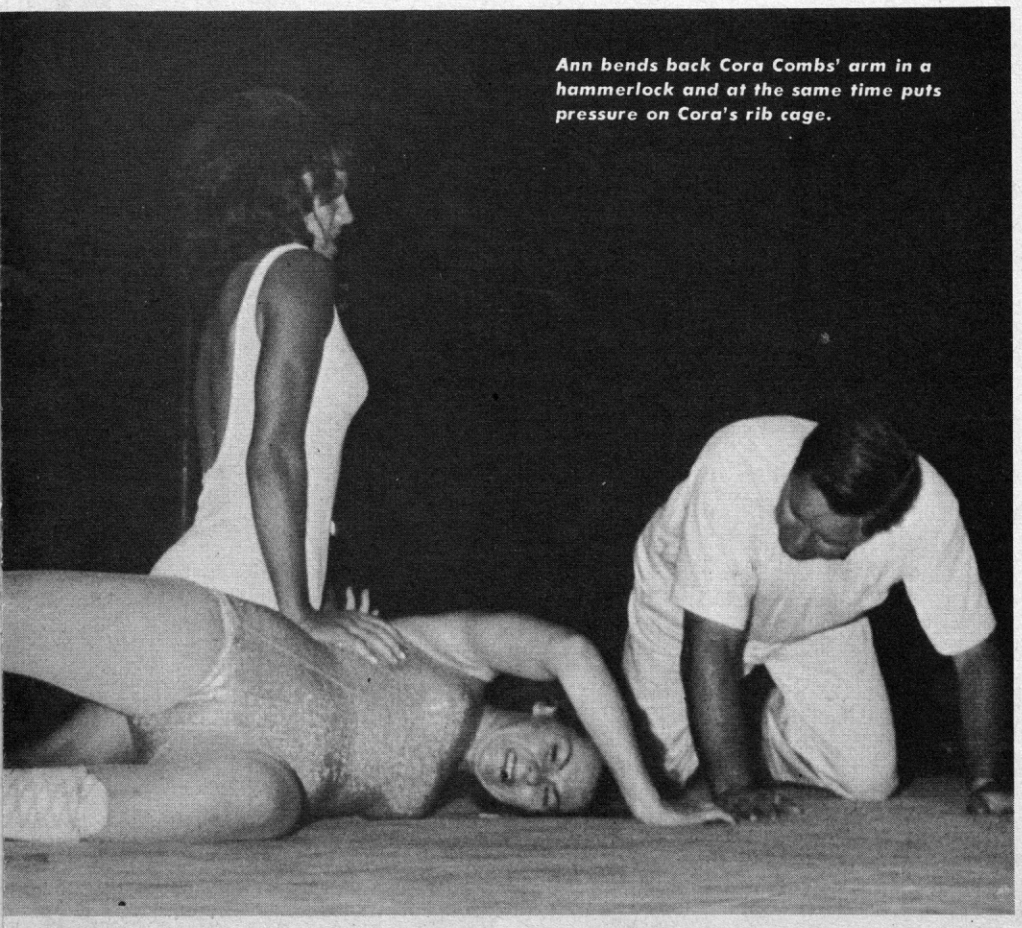
Still, Ann came mighty close to toppling the mighty Moolah. It was an impressive performance by this peppery Alabama girl who, just a short time ago, was feeding cattle and shucking corn on a 40-acre ranch.

At 23, doe-eyed Ann Casey is a comparative youngster in the veteran-loaded world of women wrestling. How did it all start? That's an easy question for Ann, who answers as she wrestles: with enthusiasm plus.

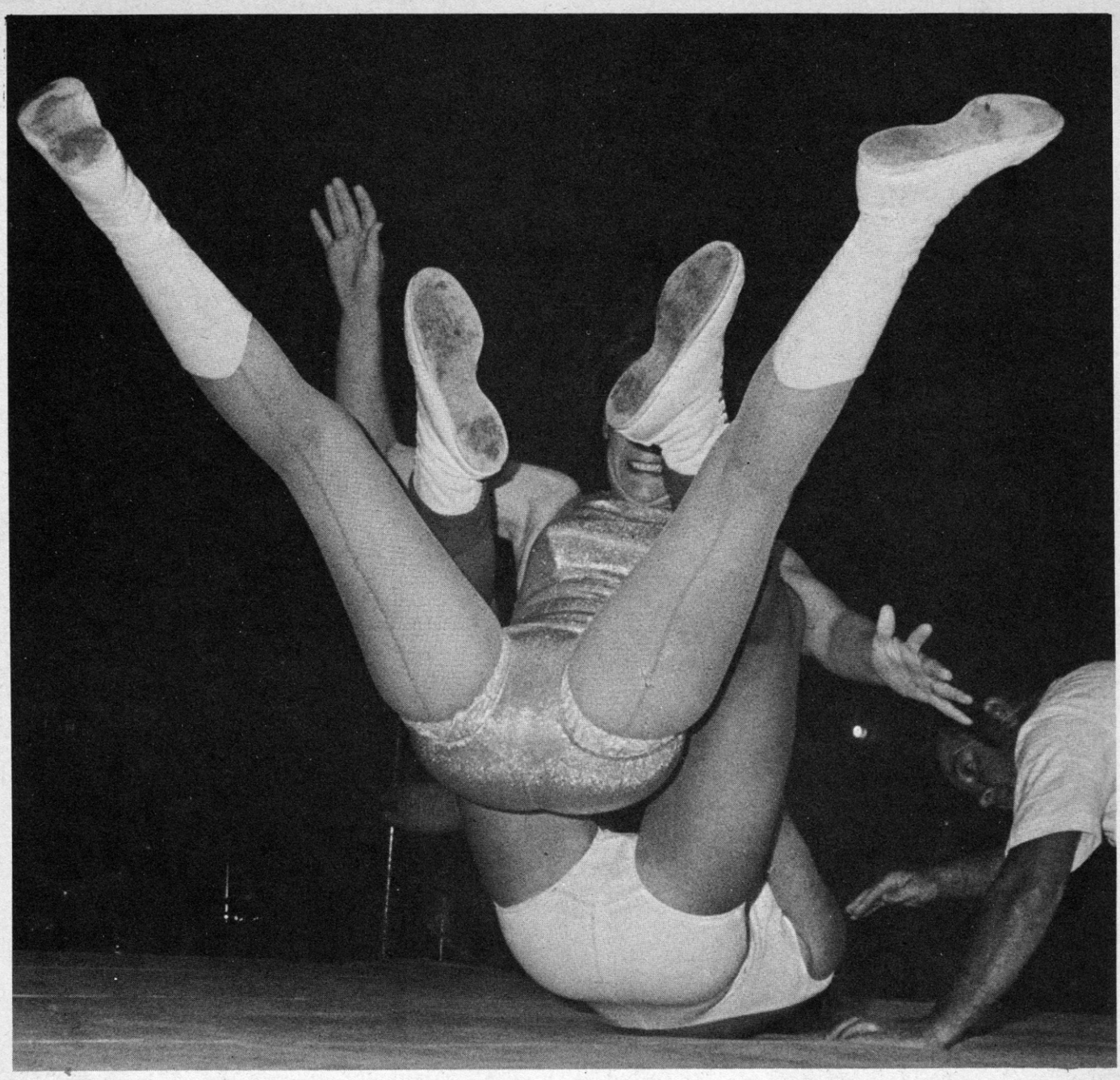
"Oh, there've been so many stories made up about me," she said. "Like . . . I hit a fresh guy in the mouth and impressed a promoter who just happened to be passing by . . . or I went to the matches for the first time and thought I could do better than the performers . . . That just isn't the way it happened.

"For me, it was kind of funny, really. I was introduced to a promoter at a friend's house in Alabama. He told me I had a good figure and that I'd be good for the game. I told him he was a flirt.

"But when I found out he was dead serious, I was flabbergasted. I thought about what he'd said, then told him, 'Why not?' And



Ann bends back Cora Combs' arm in a hammerlock and at the same time puts pressure on Cora's rib cage.



Preparing for her big moment, Casey sends Cora Combs flying. But...

that's how it was. I have to laugh about it now. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't taken him up."

Up to that point, Ann had been living aimlessly. She had gotten married after graduating from high school in Agricola, Ala., but it was an unhappy affair and when it broke up, she was already a mother at the age of 17.

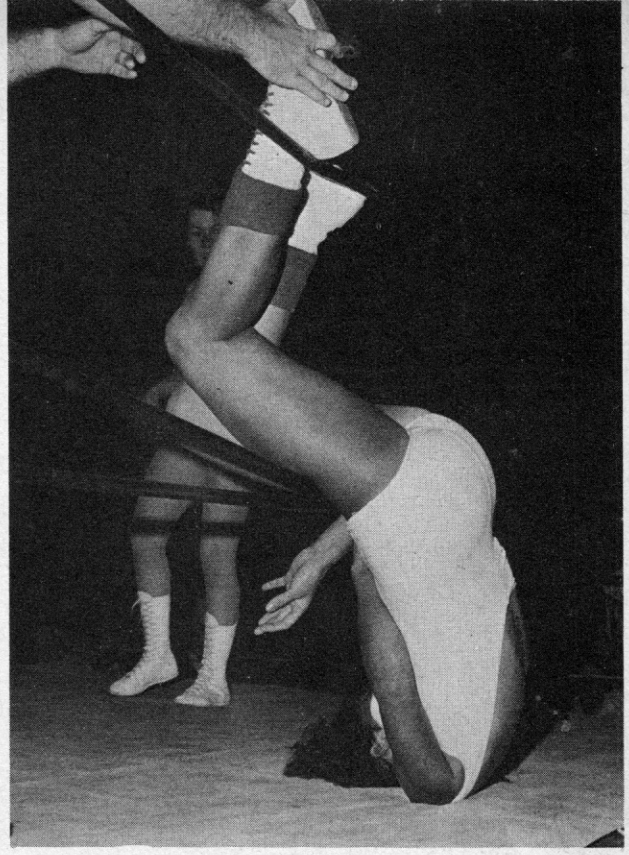
"My dad needed help on his ranch, so I took Larry there with me. We were happy, the three of us, but I kept thinking about college. I wanted to major in zoology—I'm still very fond of animals, you know, especially horses—but I guess it just got lost in the shuffle."

Ann's whole future might also have gotten lost in the shuffle if it hadn't been for that chance meeting with a promoter who had an eye for beauty. Leaving the ranch with reluctance, she trained hard for four months. "I still remember that, after only one week's training, I could leap over the top rope. That impressed me—and my handlers, too.

"I guess at that moment I knew I could make the grade. This might sound a bit far-fetched, but I knew I had found what I was looking for—travel, excitement and friends. What else could a young girl want out of life?"

Ann made her debut in Spartansburg, S. C., in a mixed tag match with partner Nick Kozak versus Rita Cortez and Barefoot

. . . Cora blunts Casey's plans . . .



Although the crowd was rooting for Casey to win, they didn't mind her being in this dangerous position for a few fleeting moments because it gave them an unusual view of her lovely curves. When one excited youth ran to the ring apron to help, he was cheered by the fans.

Joe McCarthy. Success came easy, and Ann soon appeared as a single against veteran Fran Gravette in Raleigh, N. C.

"It was a tough way to start," she recalled, "but I won—and I liked the feeling." She also came to like the feeling of being part of a whole new world—a glamorous world where she was handsomely paid for doing something she loved.

"Wrestling," she said, "has changed my entire personality and outlook on life. It has given me tremendous confidence and enabled me to travel to far-off places. Hawaii is only the beginning. I plan to tour South America, Europe, the Orient. That's even better than getting a formal education."

Behind this driving new per-

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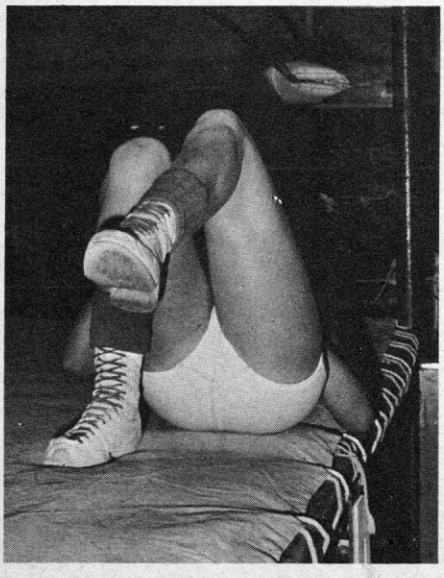
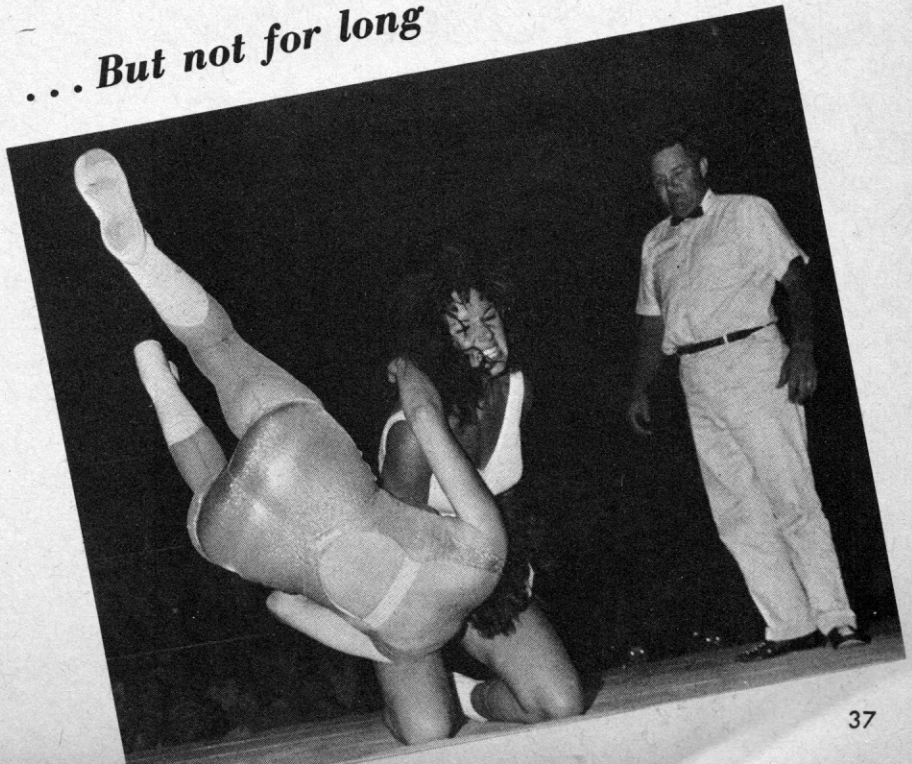


Driven over ropes by savage, two-fisted body attack, Ann takes advantage of situation by resting maximum time allowed —20 seconds. Then she went back to action.

. . . But not for long



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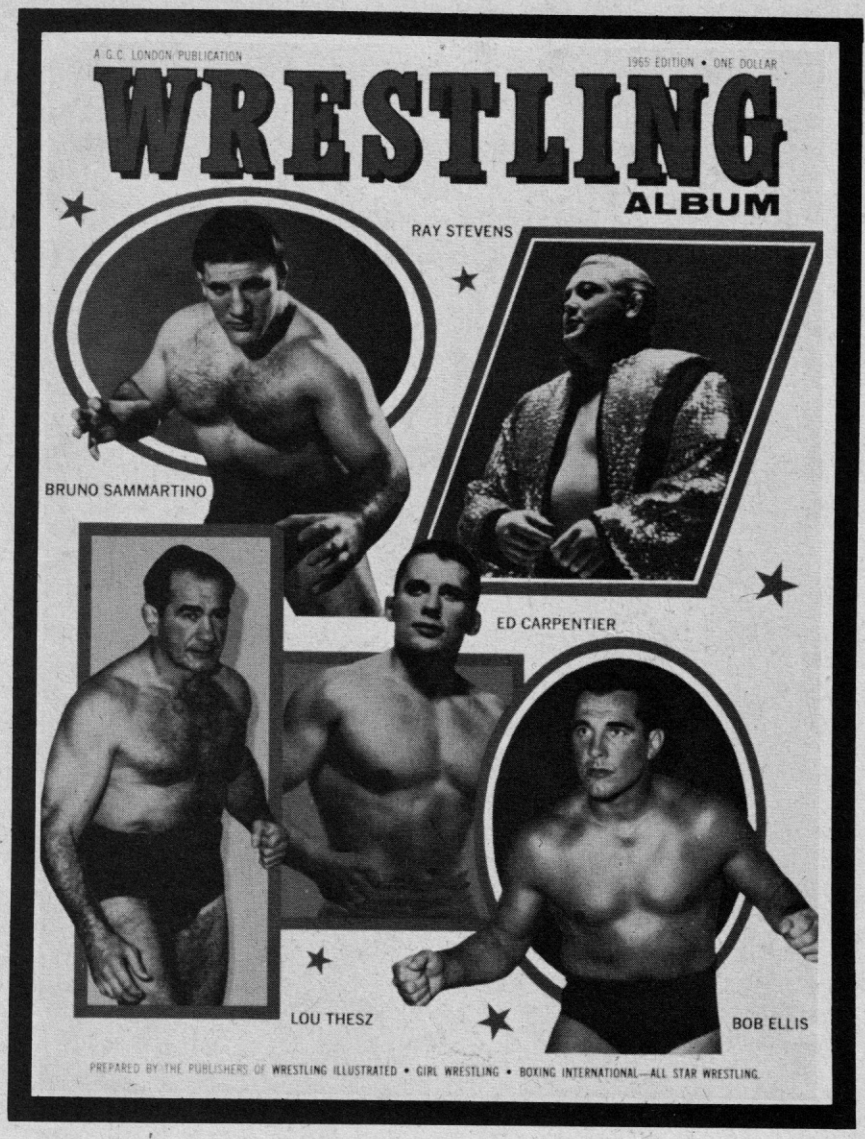

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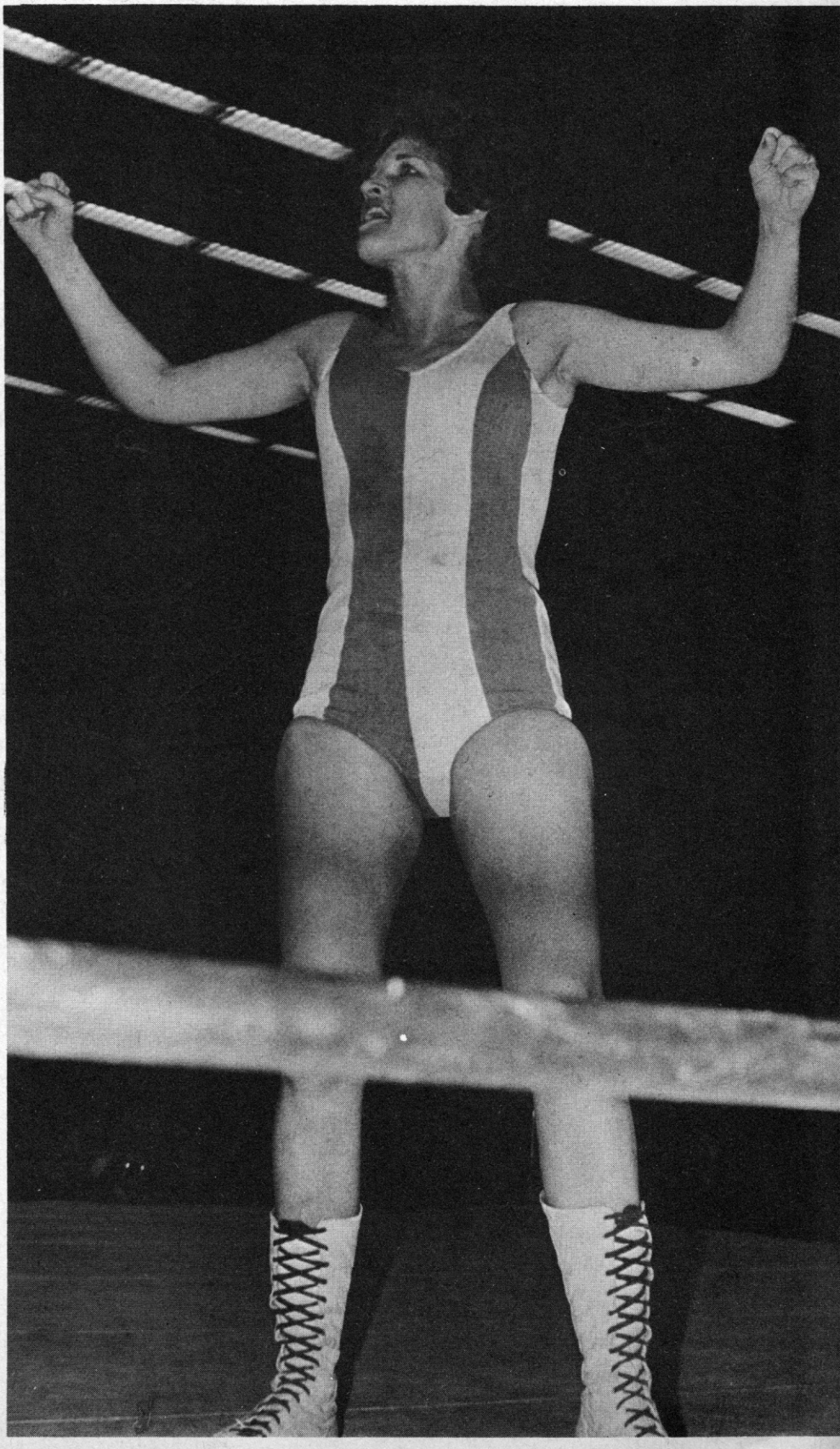
By ED LABORWIT

COOL IT, MAE!

Vivacious Mae Goodner has a hair-trigger temper that's gotten her into a lot of trouble. But she doesn't care. 'My outlook on life,' she says, 'is to do it to others before they do it to you.'



The night air felt refreshing to red-haired Mae Goodner as she stepped from her car and walked to the door of her brick split-level home in the suburbs of Nashville, Tenn.

She felt good after winning a match but her newly-purchased home with its baby blue shutters was strangely quiet when she inserted the key into the lock, turned the brass knob and stepped into the hallway.

Something was wrong. With four children at home, there should have been some noise. But not even the TV set was on. "Ben," she called softly. Her husband, a construction worker, came slowly into the living room where Mae stood, her black-collared red coat still buttoned. There was a peculiar look on his face.

"What's wrong, Ben?"

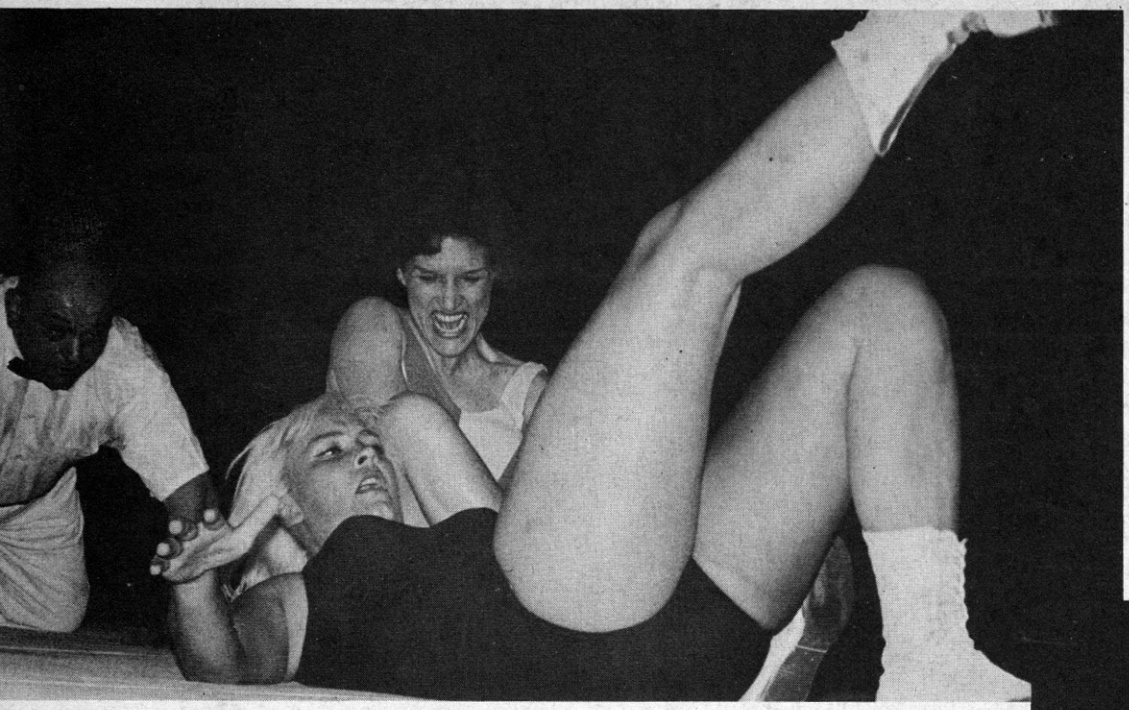
"Sit down, Mae," he said.

Mae sat down, trying to stem the fear in her heart. Finally, she blurted: "Ben, for God's sake, tell me . . .!"

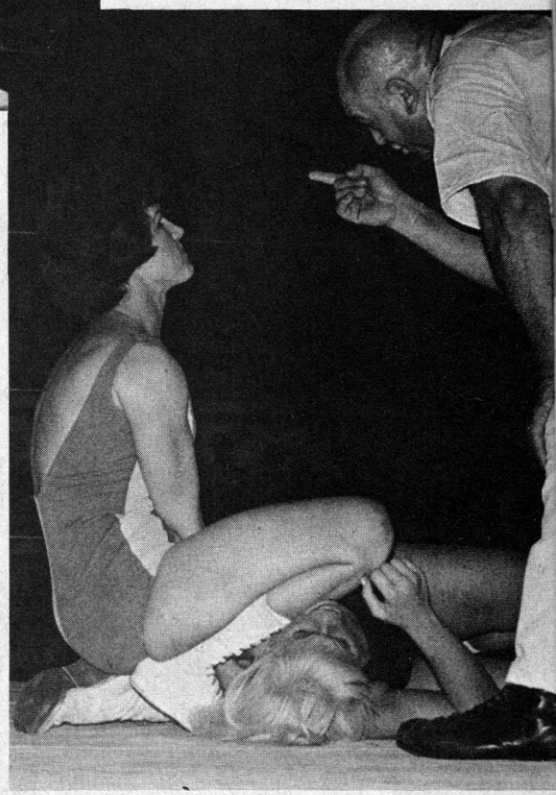
Ben told her, slowly, trying to ease the shock: Mae's mother had died that afternoon . . .

"I had been expecting it," Mae recalled recently, "but when it happened, I went numb all over."

Mae Goodner's mother was 52



Goodner uses short arm scissors on Penny Banner in effort to make Penny quit. But referee forced Mae to release her hold after she brought closed fist down on Banner's nose.



Angered by Goodner's continual violation of the rules, referee Johnny Heidman waves finger and threatens to disqualify her.

years old when she died. Losing her only eight months after a heart attack had claimed her 58-year-old father was too much for Mae to bear and she dissolved in tears.

"Daddy was a carpenter who had worked awfully hard all his life," Mae reminisced. "And mom was his constant companion till the day he died. She was suffering from leukemia, and we lived with the hopeless problem. I guess she was the bravest person I've ever met."

The tragedy was one more nail in the bitter burden that Mae Goodner has carried all her life. It's been a tough life . . . a life full of tears and heartache. Mae was the youngest daughter in a poor family of four girls and three boys and it was a battle for survival all the way.

Today, at 29, Mae Goodner has achieved some of the good things in life. But she can never forget how it used to be . . . the sacrifices, the hard work . . . Things never came easy. That's what made her what she is today. "I can't change now," she says.

"I'm an emotional girl, always have been," she tells you. "I feel like an express train without brakes. No matter what I do, I've got to go the whole way. If I can't, I feel I'm just wasting my time."

Looking at this vivacious woman, you wonder if she's putting you on. But she's deadly serious.

"You want my outlook on life?" she asks. "Well, brother, mine is to do it to them before they do it to you. That's the way it is, and that's the only way I know.

"In other words, I'll try to go as far as I can, in wrestling or in any other business, and let the rest of the world watch out for itself. I don't owe anybody a thing. I've worked for every penny, every bit of happiness I've got, and I've taken all the knocks."

What makes Mae Goodner think like this? You ask her, and there is bitterness in her reply:

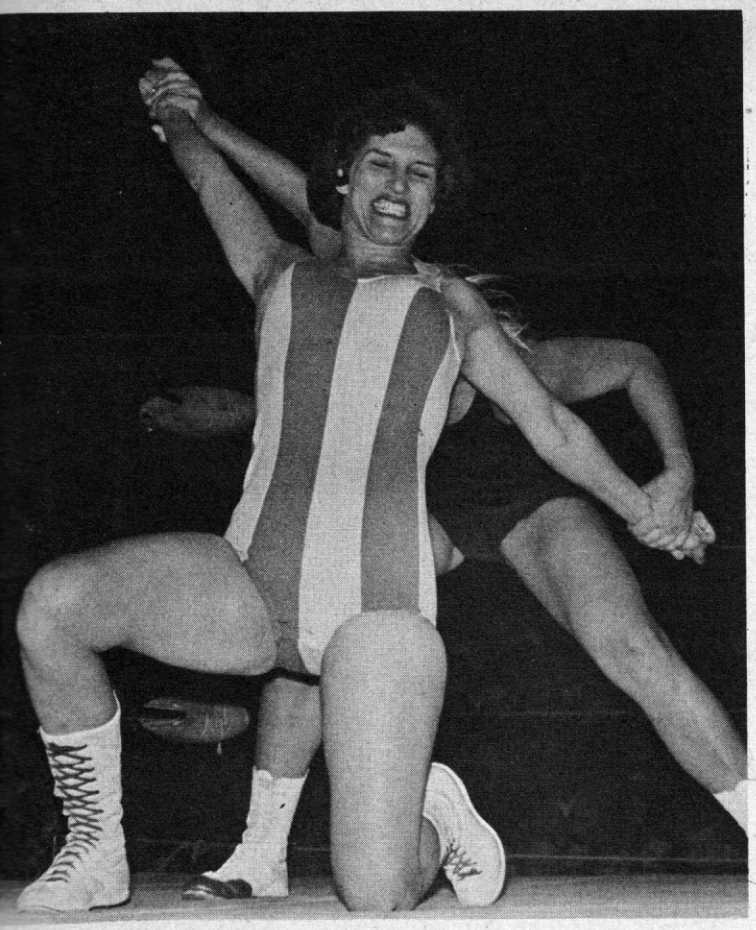
"All my life, I've been given a hard time. When I was a little girl, I had to take it from my brothers. It was the same with others later on. And I learned early that Daddy was right when he told me about this being a cruel world. I'm still learning, and I'm still fighting. This is me, from start to finish."

A tough nut? Mae doesn't deny it. "Only two people really understand me," she says. They are her husband Ben and her tag-team partner, fiery, flame-haired Cora Combs.

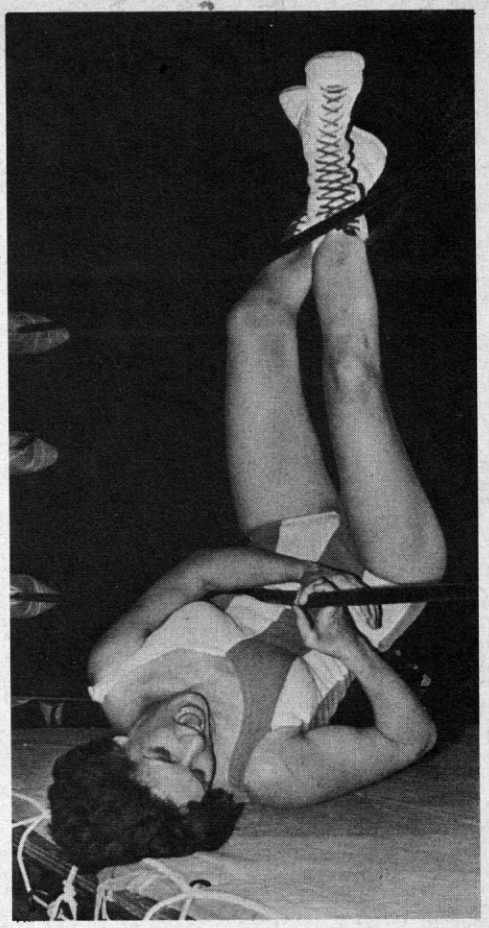
"Cora and Ben know my moods," Mae says. "They know how I react to certain situations, and they know how to cool me off. What I need is a good knock once in a while, and Cora provides that. She's the only one who could get away with it. Maybe I'm just a bit too hot-tempered for my own good, but that's the way it is."

Nevertheless, when Mae works as a single without Cora's strong arms to rein her temper, she has done phenomenally well. The fans applaud her wildly wherever she appears. The feeling, however, is not mutual.

"I used to think I could get along being a good girl. You



Banner forced Goodner into this critical position after she spun out of hammerlock. Called the "Plow" hold, victim's arms are pulled straight back and attacker gets added leverage by digging head into foe's back.



A missed flying tackle and Mae wound up in this embarrassing position.

know, like being nice to the spectators. Bowing when they wanted me to bow, winning and losing with equal graciousness . . . But that's all finished now. I've had it. From now on, it's a personal battle between me and the fans.

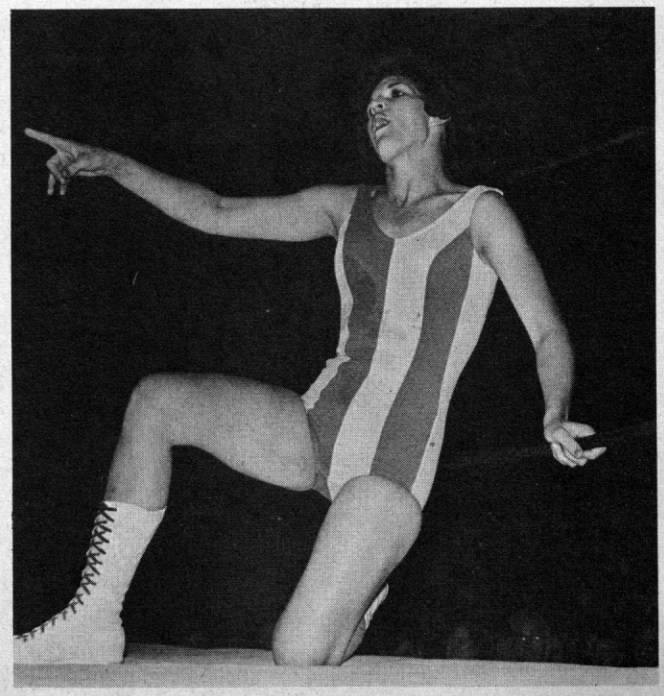
"I've fought the best right from the beginning. In my first match, in August of 1956, I wrestled in a five-girl battle royal. I was eliminated, but I cracked a few heads before it was over."

There were some mighty tough heads in that group: Verne Bottoms, Rusty Ryan, Corinne Cardero and Belle Starr, who won the match. But when it was over, Mae was disgusted with herself. "I knew I could have done better, because I *was* better than the rest of them. I'll admit, though, that I made some mistakes. But I vowed I would profit from them, and I have. I never made the same errors again."

Controlling her temper is something else again. Mae readily admits that "it's gotten me into an awful lot of trouble." But she quickly adds: "But I'll live with it. That's one thing that belongs to me, and it can't be taken away."

Still, her temper isn't as hot as it used to be. "I remember a time when friends would say 'boo,' and I'd be at their throats," she says.

This hair-trigger disposition made her many enemies. "Personally," she says, "I don't see how Ben and the kids live with me. They must think I'm some kind of nut. Like I said, Ben and Cora are the only ones who really know how I tick. I'm thank-



Goodner gestures to referee that she will not resume wrestling until he makes Penny Banner return to neutral corner.

ful for their tolerance. It makes things easier."

That's how she is today — a hefty 5'6" woman with an attractive, but wary, smile who appears bigger than her 140 pounds as she struts around the ring in her black-and-orange jacket. But to understand her complex personality, you have to go back to her childhood days.

Shortly after Mae was born in Murfreesboro, Tenn., her father moved the family to Oklahoma. They remained there until she was 11 years old, then settled in Nashville. Mae has a vivid memory of those early years. "I grew up fast," she says. "There was no time for adolescence.

"Clothes were a luxury in a growing family, so I had to quit high school in my junior year and go to work to help out. It was the toughest decision of my life because I really enjoyed school.

"I was a strong girl even then, and I wasn't allowed to join the school basketball team. They said I was too rough. I remember fuming over that. Maybe, just maybe, this was when I started to get hot-tempered."

Young Mae, her blue eyes flashing with ambition, became an adult at the age of 17. There was no metamorphosis of child to woman. Who had time for that?

"I worked as a seamstress for a while and helped make clothes for my brothers. Still, mom had lots to do and I felt that I had to help a little more. I worked from seven in the morning to 11 at night as a waitress and cashier in a neighborhood restaurant."

Though she was working steady, Mae still hadn't found a goal. Life was a treadmill . . . get up, work, sleep and eat on the run . . . Dull, indeed, for a girl with boundless energy.

Three years after she quit school, Mae, by then a pretty 20-year-old woman, went to a wrestling match in Nashville. The card that night featured Millie Stafford and Kathy Branch.

"My date talked me into going to the matches," Mae recalls. "I was too busy supporting the family to think about dates or romance or wrestling matches. But that night, for the first time in years, I really enjoyed myself. I saw myself up there in the ring and I knew, I just knew, I could do just as well as the performers.

"It's funny when I think about it now. My date was acquainted with Danny Dusek, the famous Nashville trainer. I was asked if I'd like to become a wrestler. On an impulse, I decided to give it a try. I think it was more curiosity than anything else."

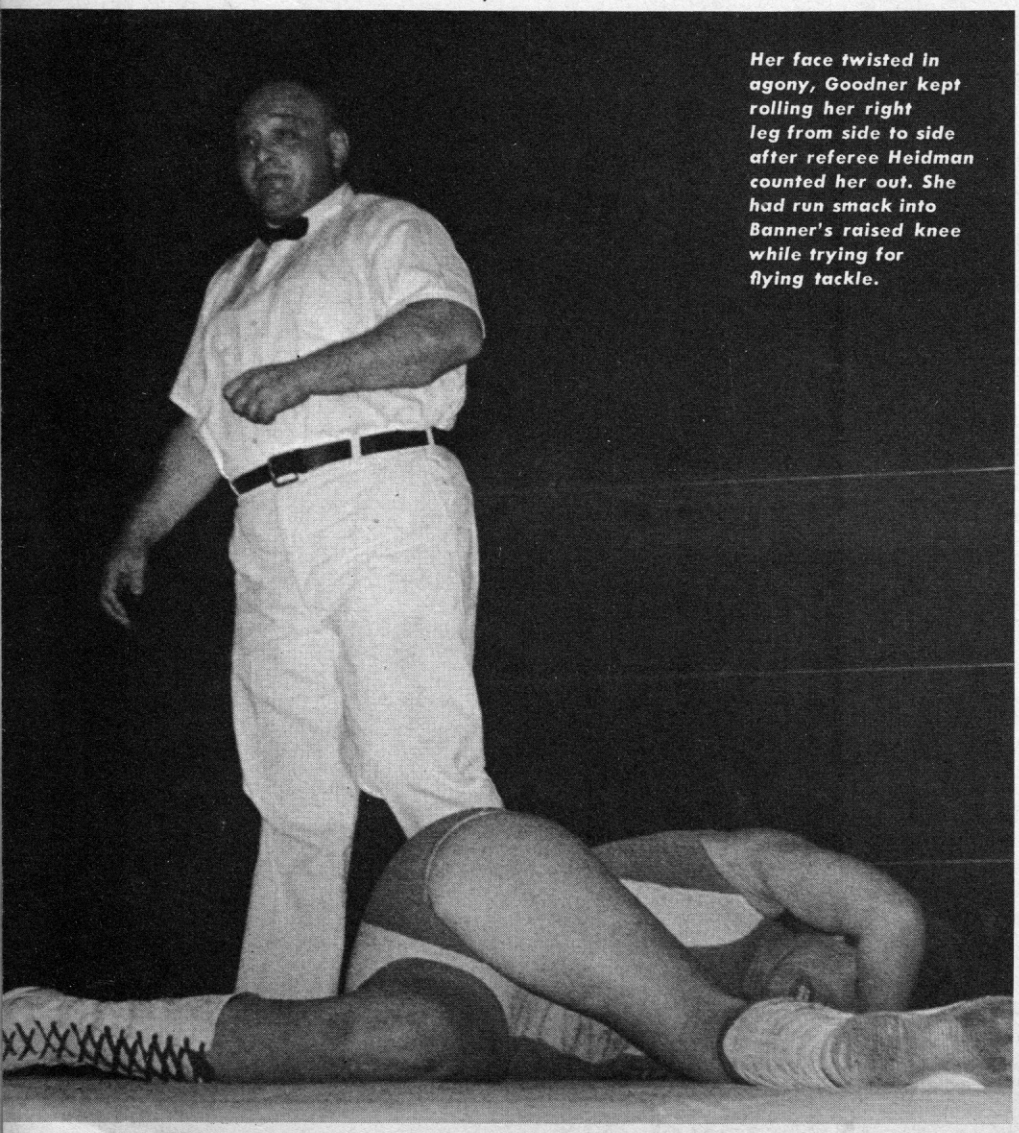
After eight months of training, Mae got her first taste of professional combat—in the five-girl battle royal which Belle Starr won. Almost nine years later, Mae still feels the same way about her career.

"Whenever I step into the ring, I know I'm better than my opponent," she says. "This is something that's in my blood, something I was born with, and never learned to control."

There was something else she never learned to control: her hatred for the fans. "They make me sick," she snarls. "They come to the matches all dolled up and never think twice about throwing food and drinks all over the floor and into the ring.

"I've tried not to let this bother me, but it does. It always has. That's why I get a big charge out of making them angry. I'll use any tactics to pull them out of their seats, and I hope they fall down doing it. They're all the same — sick people with good money."

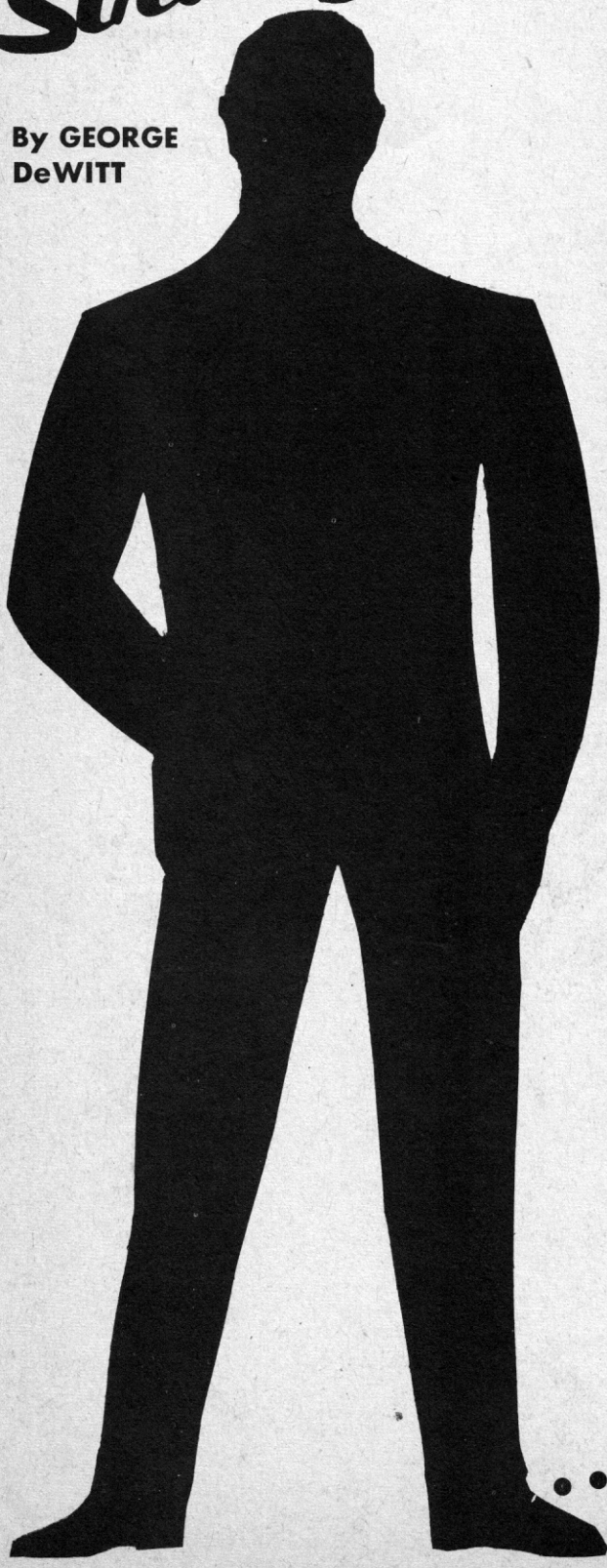
When you suggest that Mae is sharing a hefty slice of that "good money," she gives you a hard stare. "I earn every cent of it," she says between clenched teeth. And so she does. Things have never come easy to Mae. But maybe, just maybe, she's due for a change. She deserves it. ■

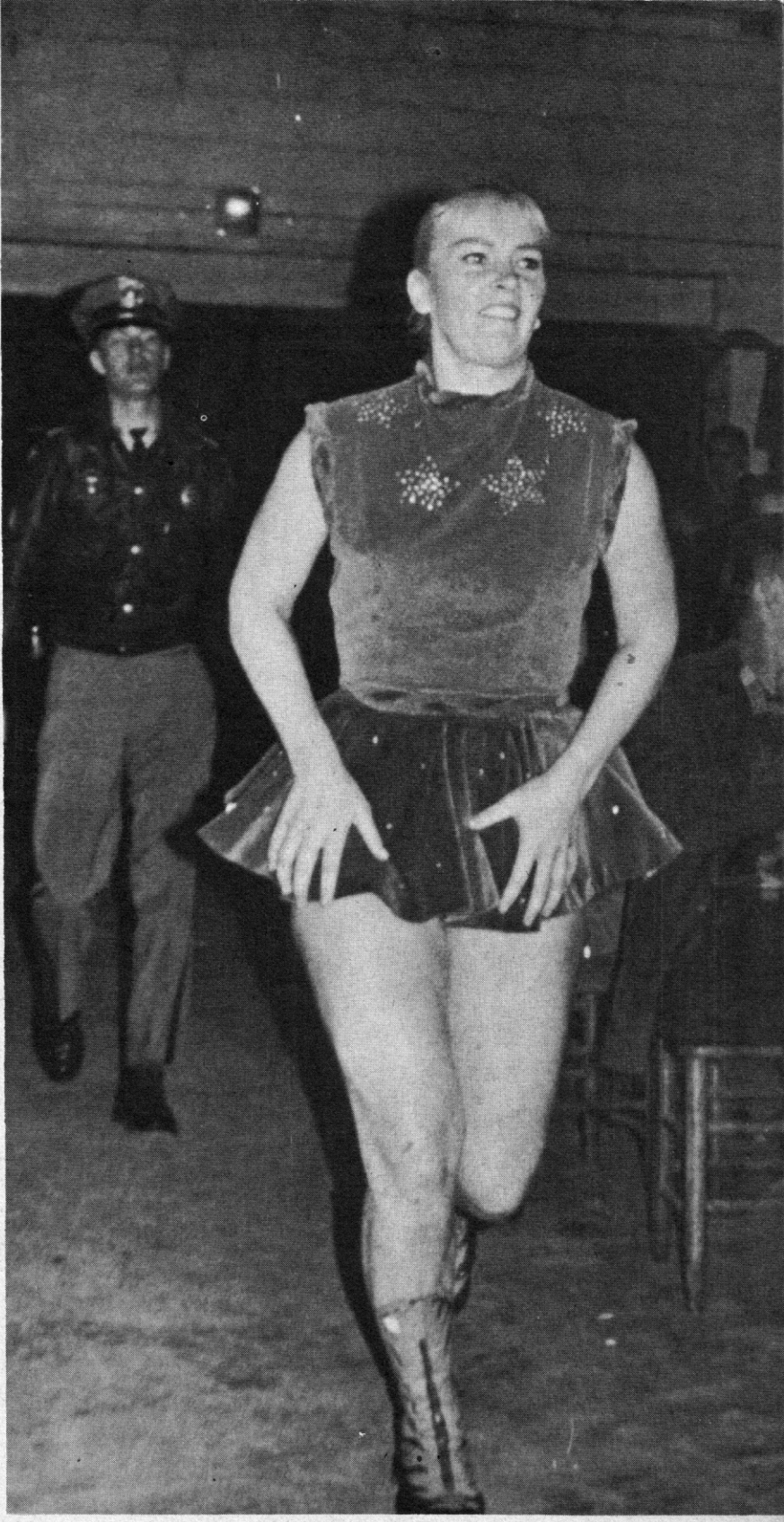


Her face twisted in agony, Goodner kept rolling her right leg from side to side after referee Heidman counted her out. She had run smack into Banner's raised knee while trying for flying tackle.

The Intimate Stranger...

By GEORGE DeWITT





...In Penny Banner's Life

(See next page)

Someday, Penny and Johnny Weaver hope to occupy their dream home in St. Louis. But until then, they're resigned to marriage-on-the-fly.

On a hill overlooking one of the better neighborhoods in the suburbs of St. Louis is a beautiful home with picture windows and rich wood paneling.

It's a dream house, but chances are you won't find it occupied. If you do, the tenants will probaby be strangers from one month to the next.

You'll have to look through the "For Lease" columns of the local newspaper to find out why. Every so often, an advertisement will appear that may sound something like this:

FOR LEASE: Beautiful, modern home. Has had three tenants in the past five years. Original owners have lived here only two weeks since construction. This is due to job that keep them away from the area.

Five years ago, Kenneth Weaver had the home built for his new bride, a local girl named Mary Ann Kostecki.

Two weeks after the Weavers moved in, they moved right out again. And they have never been back since, except to drive past it once a year.

Today, Kenneth Weaver calls himself "Johnny" Weaver. That's halfway close to the original, but Mary Ann Kostecki has changed her entire name to Penny Banner.

Penny and husband Johnny Weaver pose for our cameraman in Norfolk, Va., arena a few hours before she went into the ring. Johnny is also a top pro wrestler.

Both Penny and Johnny Weaver are top wrestlers who like to think they lead normal lives. But it isn't so. They can't call any one place home, and they have a four-year-old daughter who sees them only once in a blue moon.

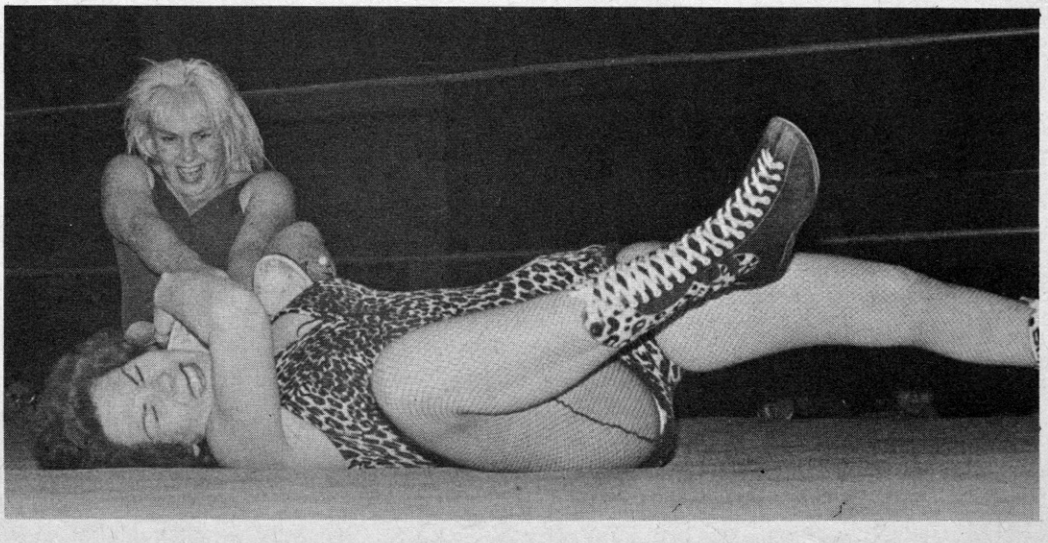
It's rough indeed when a wife leaves her husband at 6 o'clock one morning and returns to him at 2 a.m. the next day—usually in a strange town.

Johnny Weaver is philosophical about it. "That's our life," he says.

Penny herself insists that "we're just like everyone else, really. Oh, there are some things that might differ from other people's lives, but not much."

Not much?

"We try to have breakfast together, if we're not in a hurry to go somewhere," she says. "Like



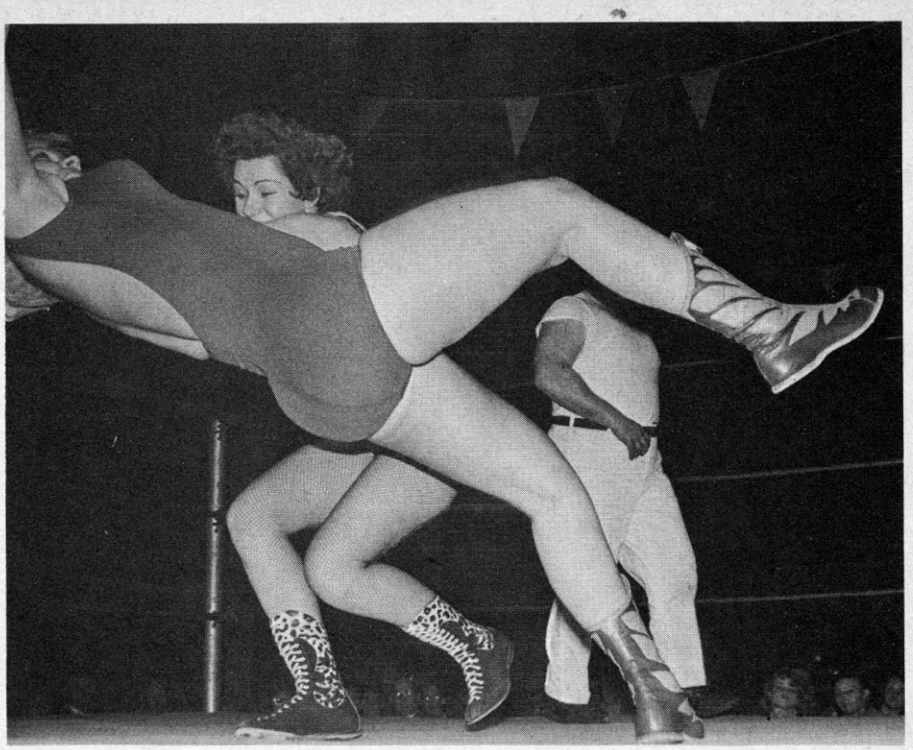
Cora Combs twists in agony as Penny tries to tear her arm out of its socket with punishing arm-draw hold. After about eighty seconds, Combs broke free and . . .

the other day, I had a match at a North Carolina Marine Base, and Johnny was working in Virginia. I left him early in the morning." Then she adds: "I hope he remembered my goodby kiss."

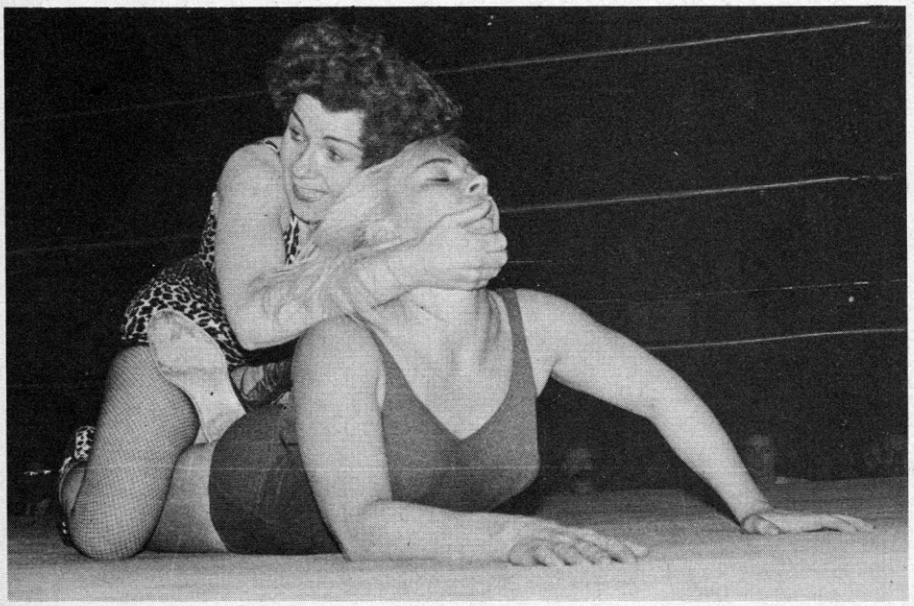
For the Weavers, the big meal of the day is dinner. But dinner comes at an odd hour. "We can't eat later than four in the afternoon if we're working that night," Penny explains.

It doesn't happen very often, but sometimes Penny and Johnny are booked on the same card. This gives them a chance to get together. More often than not, however, they work miles apart. They have discussed these separations many times, but without rancor.

"We have learned to accept the situation," Banner says. "When we're fortunate to be booked in the same arena, we go back to our hotel and just sit and watch TV. Or we'll just talk. We'll discuss



. . . sent Banner crashing to mat with swishing right cross to the head. This photo shows why most fans say, "Penny Banner looks gorgeous even when she's falling."



Penny is caught in combination leglock and face hold and Combs applies maximum pressure trying to make Banner give up. Penny saved herself by grabbing ropes.

the matches and our opponents, a routine thing for us now, and something we've gotten used to after all these years."

Penny and Johnny may have become accustomed to this haphazard situation. But what about their daughter — the child who waits patiently for them to return home?

Says Banner: "Wendi Ann is well-adjusted to our way of life, but it hasn't always been that way. She had to be taught that her mommy and daddy wouldn't always be home. Wendi learned well, and I think the reason she behaves so well in an unusual situation is that she sees us on television occasionally and knows we're thinking of her.

"Wendi is a cute little gal, and we're very proud of her. But I must admit that she's got a little tomboy in her. We kid her all the time about it. And you should see the mean armlock she puts on Johnny when he's home."

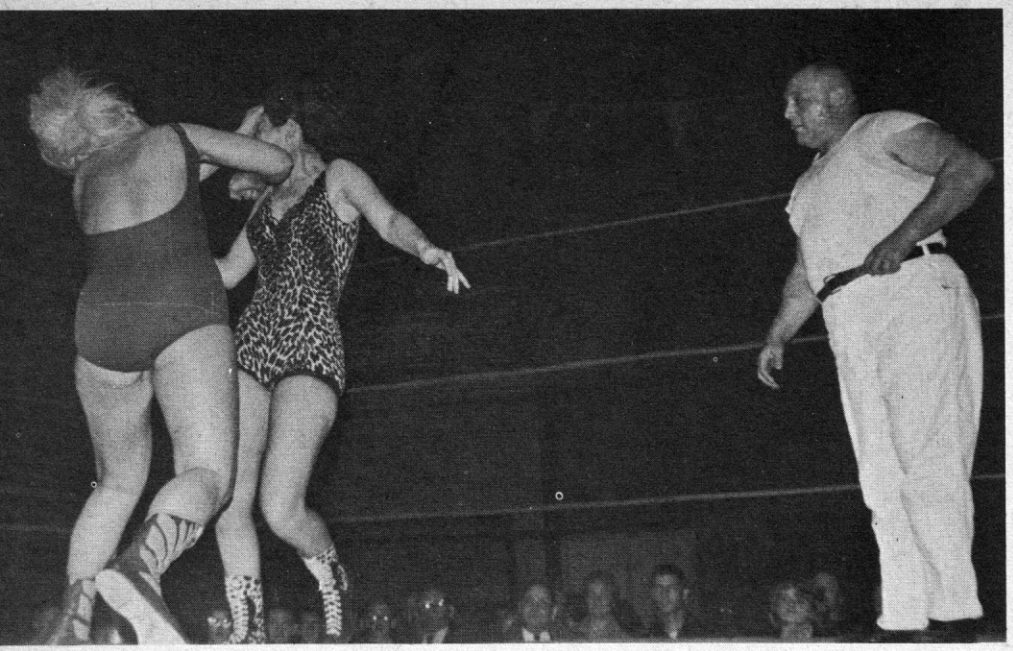
"When he's home . . ." That's how Penny puts it.

"I really don't work very much these days—not as much as I used to, anyway. Wendi stays with my mom in St. Louis, and when I'm not working, I sew and wash clothes, paint oil portraits, cook, clean house and write Johnny's publicity. In fact, I do everything expected of a mother except go to PTA meetings. I'm sure that will be on the schedule, too, when Wendi begins going to school.

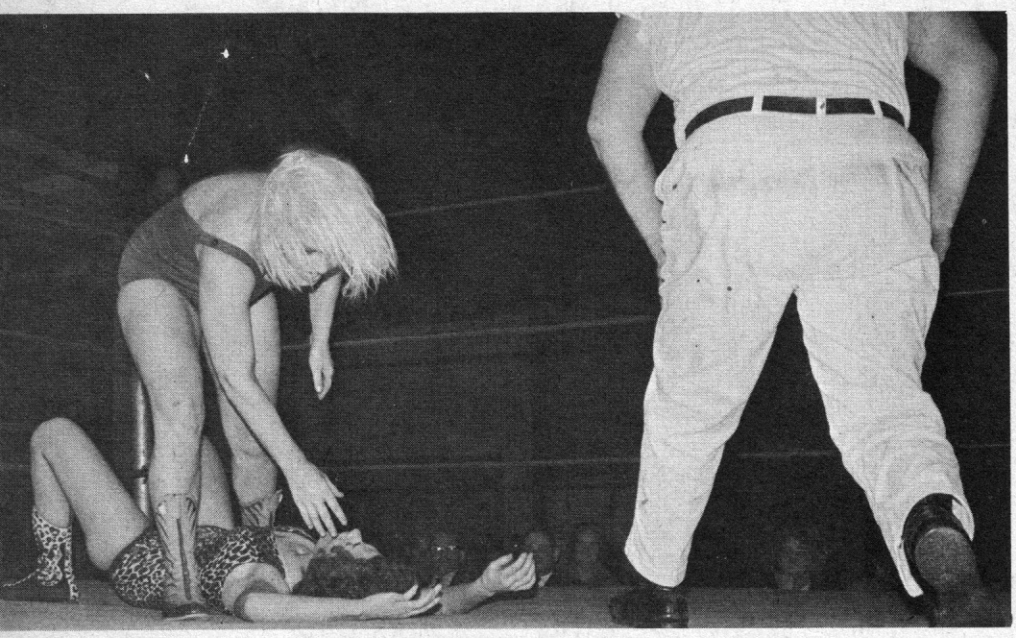
"Wrestling is my form of relaxation. Some women get it by watching TV, but I let off steam in the ring. Last year, I worked about 60 matches. That's little more than once a week away from Wendi.

"I'll get out of the business when Wendi begins school, but Johnny has to make a living for us. Our daughter knows this, and she's used to missing her father. But when Johnny is home, he spends an awful lot of time with her, making the daughter-dad relationship a real thing."

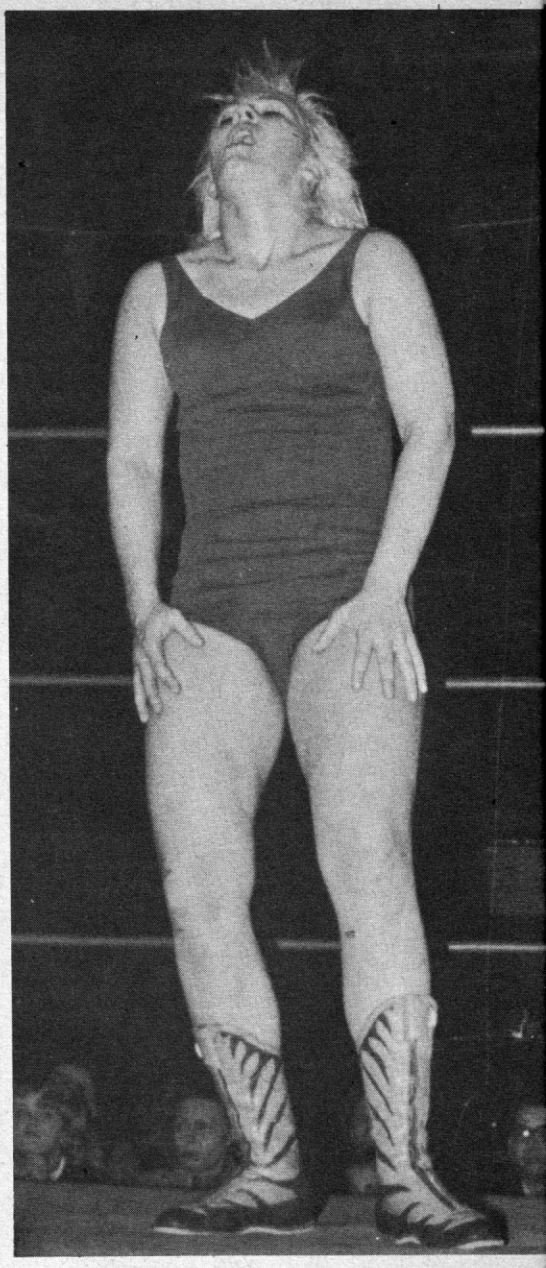
To all this, Johnny says, "Penny will quit when Wendi goes to school. But I'm sure I'll be a wrestler until my body can't take



Banner is noted for having the most effective forearm smash in the business. Note how she gets full weight of her body into booming wallop against side of Comb's face.



Knocked unconscious by series of five forearm smashes, Combs lies stretched out on floor. But Banner, even after she has won bout, grabs for Cora's hair.



Banner, who although she will not admit it, is very proud of her good looks and figure, gasped in horror when shown this picture. "I'll never stretch my muscles after a match again," she said. "I had no idea I could possibly look so bad."

it any longer. This is my eighth year, and I'm in great shape. I guess I owe some of this to my wife and the understanding she gives me in a unique situation."

A wrestler for a wife?

"You know, I never thought about that until we got married," Johnny says. "Afterward, I felt we had something going for us. It's a good conversation piece, and we can help each other in our work. How many other married couples are as fortunate as that?

"If I didn't have a wife like Penny, who watches me constantly, I really don't think I could do as well financially. A wrestler can develop some awful bad habits, you know. When we're on the same card, we make it a point to watch each other wrestle. Afterward we compare notes. There's a certain amount of criticism, but that's to be expected. We've also cataloged all the weak points of wrestlers we've faced. You can't imagine the advantages this gives us."

These advantages haven't kept them out of trouble, of course. Which brings up another side of their way of life and it starts with a question: "How do you feel when Penny gets hurt?"

Says Johnny: "We both know it's going to happen sometime. In fact, it can happen every night. But we look at it only one way—the only way you can—it happens!

"In 1961, I had all the ligaments torn from my right elbow. I couldn't use the arm for three weeks. It happened in a match with Don Leo Jonathan, and Penny watched every moment of my agony. But we both realized it was just one of those things.

Continued on Page 62

By JAMES LONGSTREET

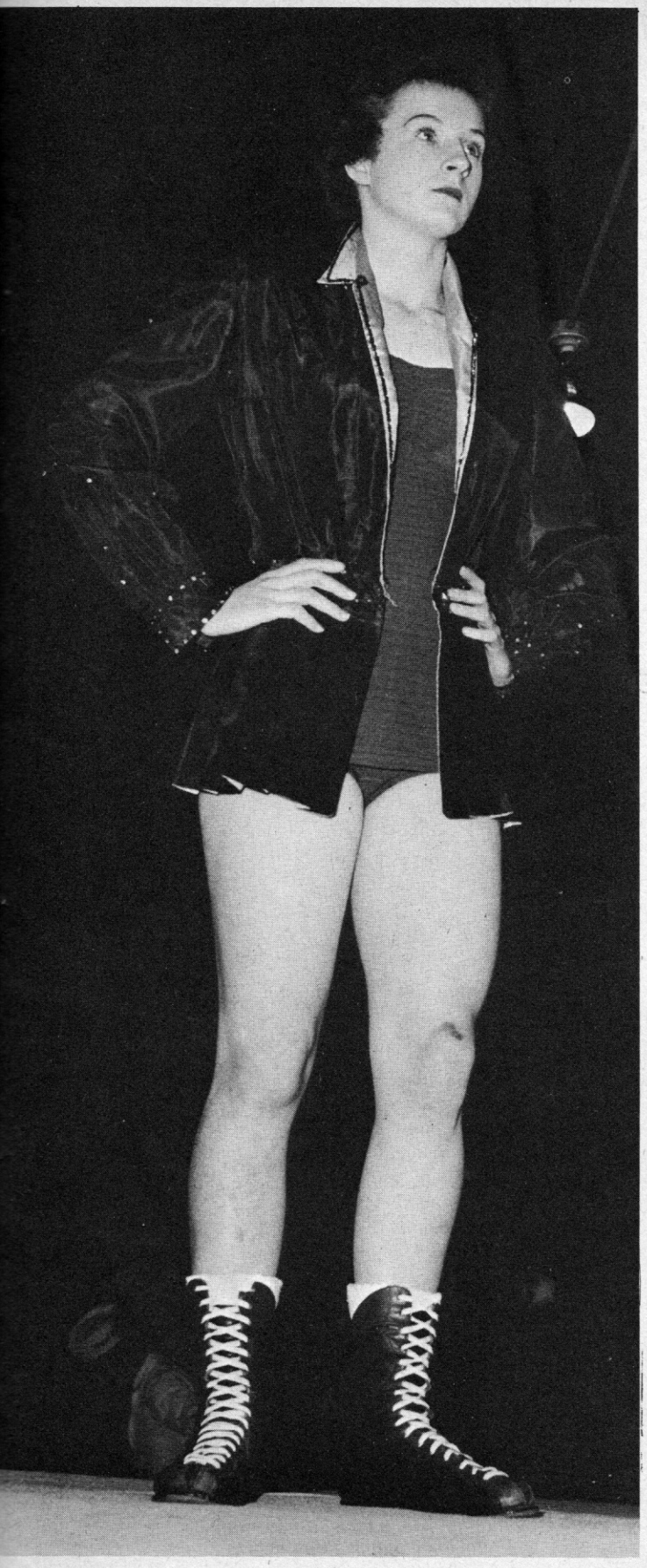
THE GIRL WHO REFUSES TO CHANGE

Kay Noble is thankful that the good Lord blessed her with so much. She refuses to hide or alter her features with dyes and paints and she adores playing the role of the little girl next door fighting off the bullies.

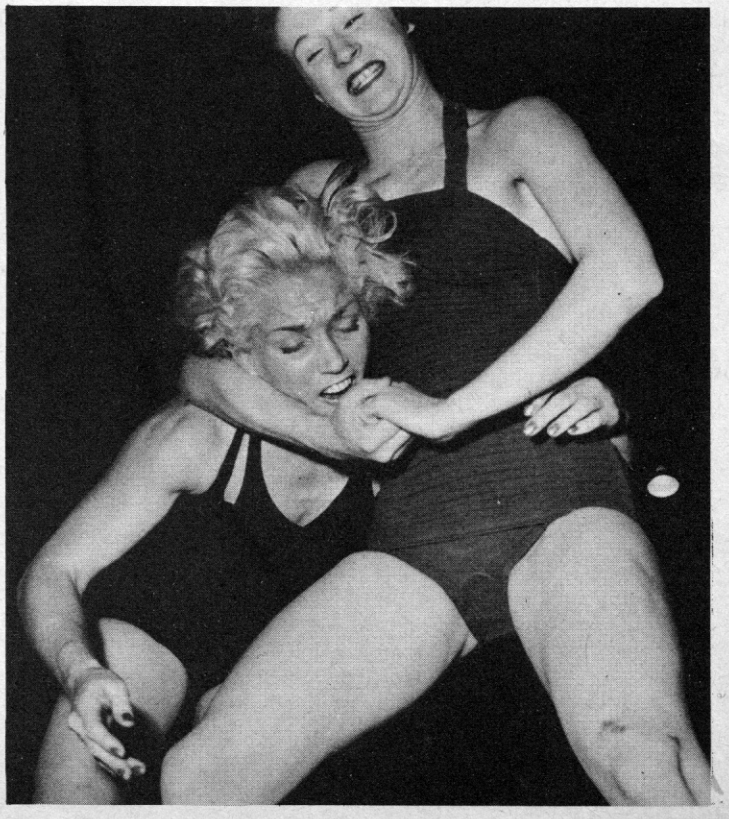
When I was 17 years old," Kay Noble recalled, "I was billed as the 'World's Youngest Girl Wrestler.' "

"What year was that?" we asked.

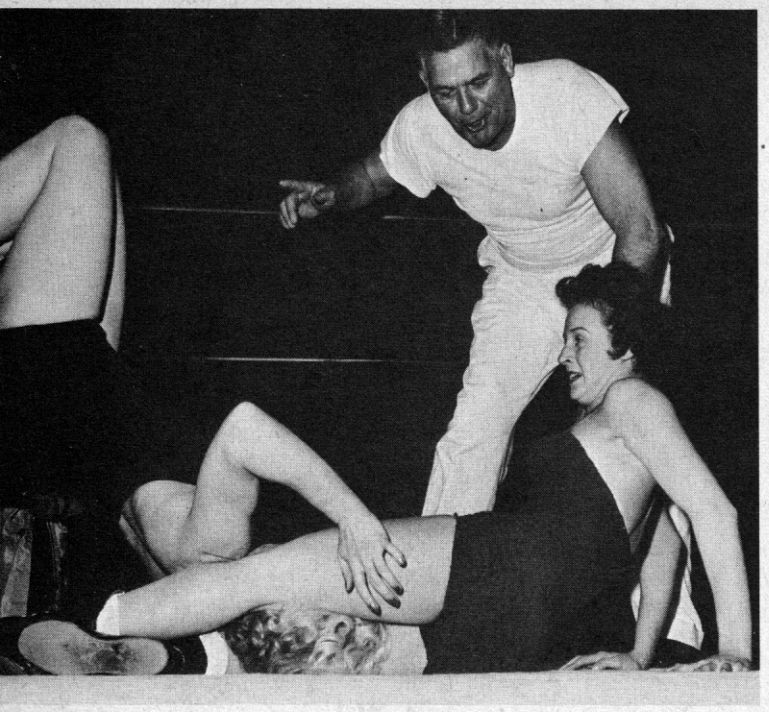
The well-built brunette grinned and said, "That's an unfair question. I may be a wrestler, but I am also a woman." *Continued*



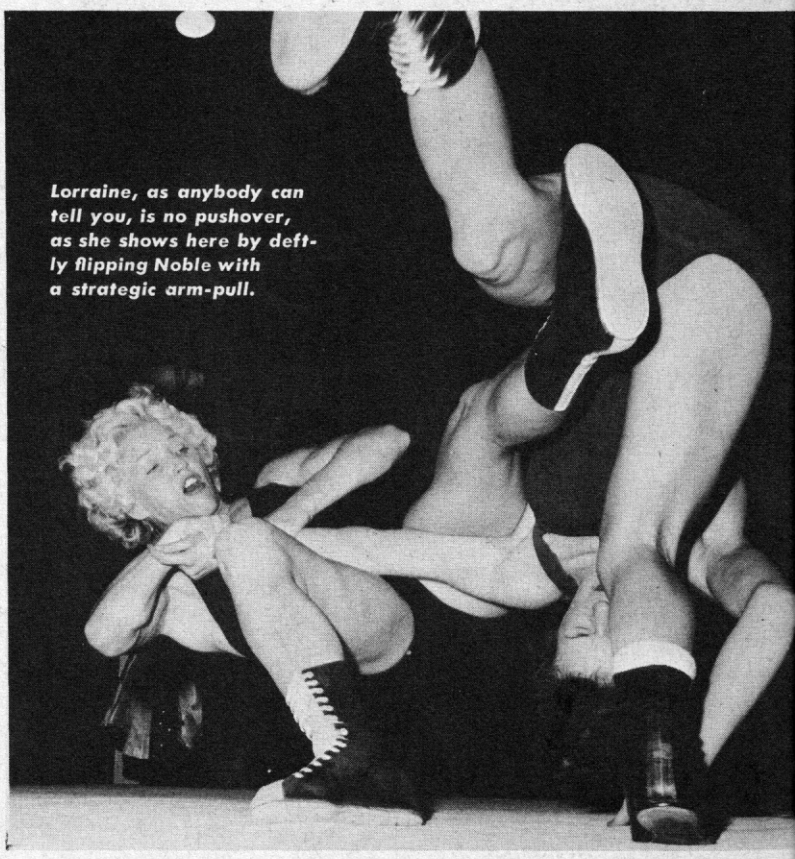
Kay Noble (above) had the benefit of excellent teachers when she broke in—teachers like Laura Martinez.



Lorraine Johnson grunts as Noble applies pressure on punishing headlock. Kay looks as if a stiff breeze could knock her over, but she packs a lot of dynamite.



Getting Lorraine Johnson into a position like this is no easy trick, but it's second nature to an "old" professional like Kay Noble. Johnson, oddly enough, was Kay's first opponent.



Lorraine, as anybody can tell you, is no pushover, as she shows here by deftly flipping Noble with a strategic arm-pull.

It took about five minutes to trick Kay into giving the year. It was 1958.

Today, at 24, Kay Noble may not be the youngest girl wrestler—nor the prettiest—but she certainly is one of the few real professionals in the business.

"I have to admit," she said, "that I know more holds and have a better understanding of leverage, balance and that sort of thing than the average girl I wrestle. It isn't that I'm smarter than they are, or stronger. I just happened to be lucky when I was breaking in and I had good teachers."

By good teachers, Kay means Laura Martinez, a fiery Mexican champion who was assigned the job of "breaking in this kid with the long arms and legs."

Martinez got her orders from promoter Gust Karras, who gave Noble her chance back in 1958. Karras didn't do it because he wanted to give the kid a break, or anything so benevolent. What appealed to him was the fact that Kay Noble had been born and raised in St. Joseph, Mo., where Karras happened to be promoting wrestling matches. Like all smart promoters, Gust Karras knew that the best way to attract crowds was to give them a local hero. So he issued a one-sentence order to the experienced Laura Martinez—"Work out with this kid and tell me if we can make something out of her."

Martinez nodded, then took Kay Noble by the hand and guided her into the ring (the ropes were not in place) in deserted St. Joseph City Stadium.

"It was about 2 in the afternoon of a very hot summer day," Laura recalled. "I'll never forget how Kay looked when she went to the opposite corner and waited for me to call time. She looked so skinny that I figured a stiff breeze would knock her over. Actually, she was 5 feet 7 and weighed 132. It was her height that was misleading.

"I found out how misleading when she got me in a headlock and nearly ripped my head off. I kept yelling, 'That's enough, kid! Take it easy.' But she kept right on squeezing like she was fighting for her life and all I could do was yank down on a fistful of her hair. She would have broken my neck if I hadn't pulled her off."

Martinez and Noble worked out for the next two weeks and then Laura reported back to Gust Karras, "Don't give up on this kid, Gust. She needs a lot of work, but she'll pay you back a hundred times for any breaks you give her now."

Karras took Martinez' advice and ordered her to continue teaching Noble. To give Kay experience against various styles, he later brought in other top girl stars to work out with her behind locked doors. Finally, the 17-year-old kid with the long legs and broad shoulders was ready to go before an audience.

"My first opponent," Kay recalled, "was Lorraine Johnson." Kay grinned and wiped her brow. "Can you imagine Karras throwing me in with somebody like Johnson right off the bat! I could have got killed. In fact, I darned near did."

The promoter was chided by other girl wrestlers

for what they called "a terrible mismatch." But Laura Martinez thought differently.

"He knows what he's doing," she told them. "He knows this new kid will stand up."

And stand up Kay Noble did, as the pictures on these pages show.

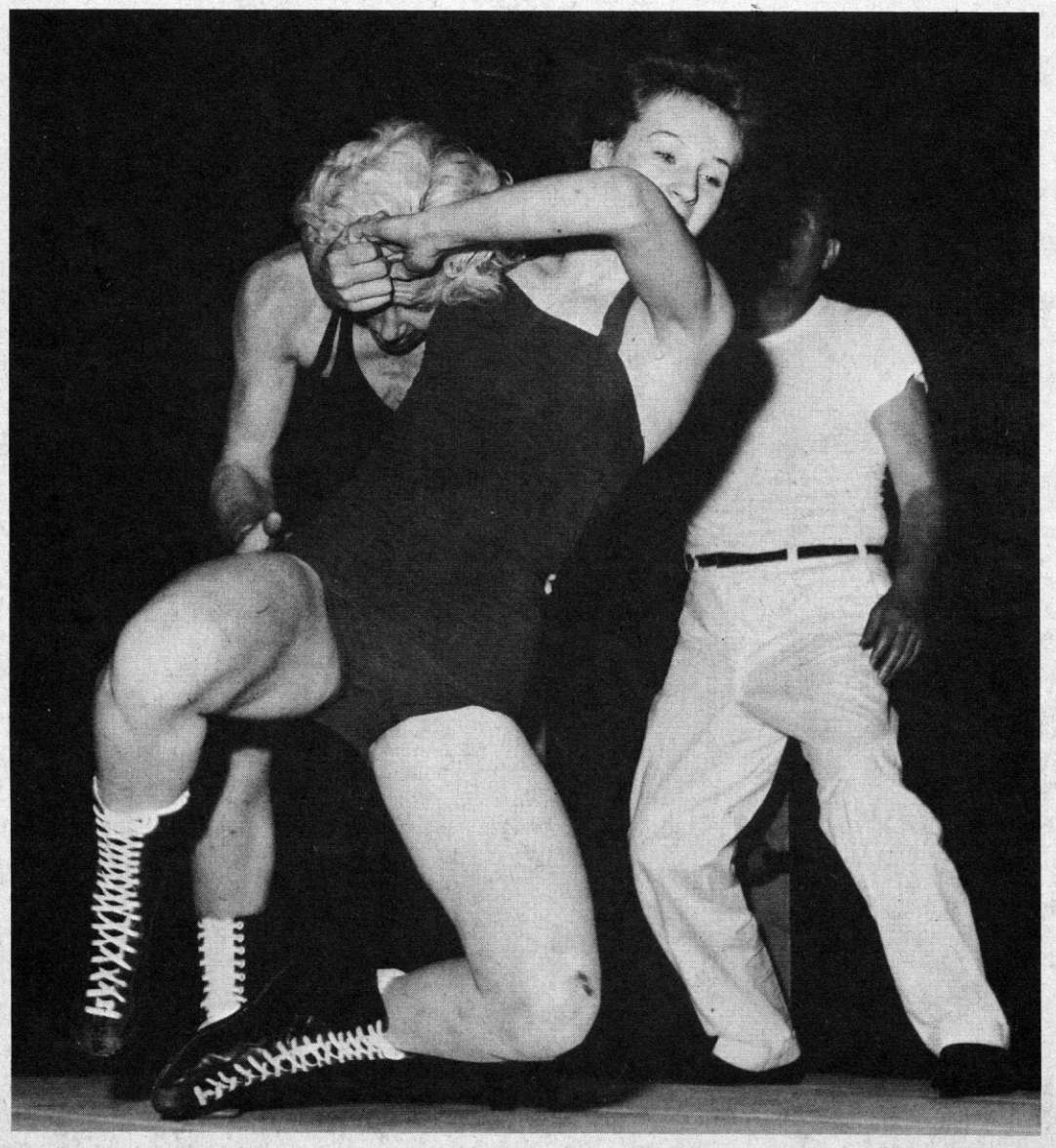
Kay has come a long way since those "breaking in" days. She became a top drawing card in cities like Chicago, Des Moines, Omaha, Kansas City, Topeka, Houston and Amarillo. People came to see her because she always gave the illusion of the nice-girl-next-door defending herself against bullies. Everybody rooted for Kay.

Noble never tried to play the role of a sex kitten. "I could have dyed my hair blonde and made myself look more appealing—to men—but it just wasn't in me to be a fake. It never was and it never will be. The good Lord gave me an awful lot, and I'm thankful for His blessings. I'll never try to hide what He gave me."

Kay is a welcome contrast to the bleached blondes who know only how to kick an opponent in the head, or stick their fingers into an undefended eye. "I use legitimate wrestling holds," she insists proudly. "I favor flying scissors—head or body—and flying tackles. They are not only effective, but spectacular, too, and the people enjoy seeing them used."

Kay Noble is unusual in many ways. For example: She never dreams about being world champion. "If it comes, fine," she says philosophically. "If it doesn't, I'll still be around. It bugs me to hear other wrestlers keep talking about becoming champion. They do it day and night. I can't understand it. A thing like that can become an obsession and wind up ruining you. I never even think about it."

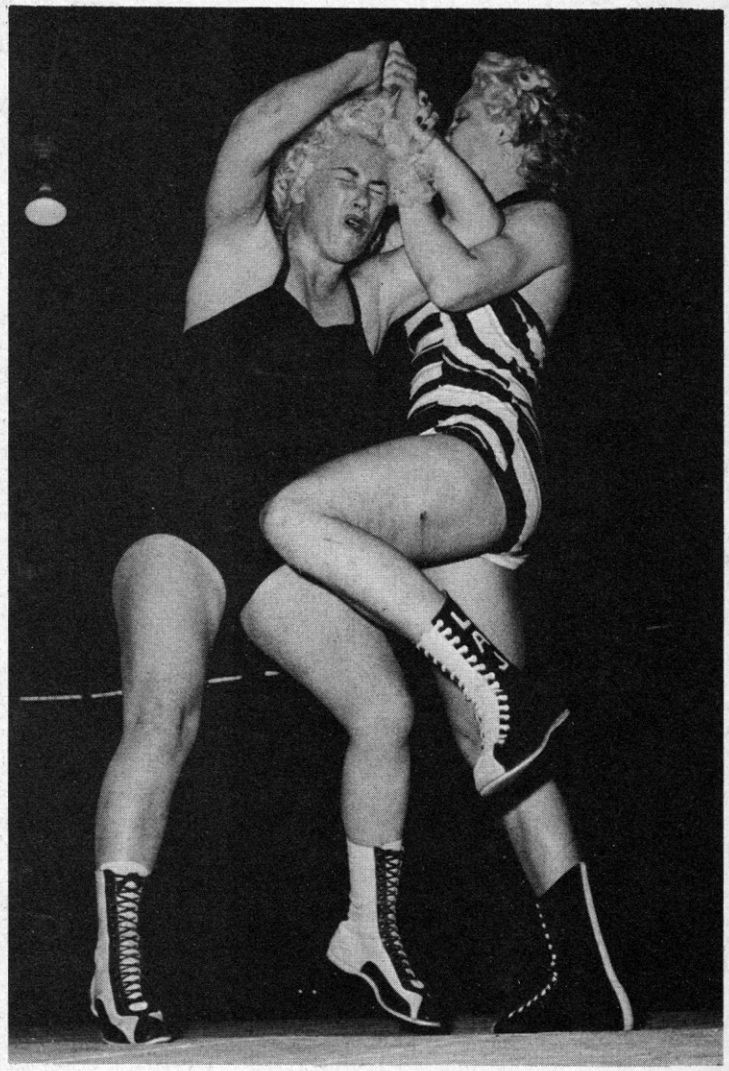
Which seems to us the logical way to look at things. And it also makes us think that Kay Noble, who was once the youngest in the business, has a better chance of winning the title than any of the others because, after all, she's a grown girl now. ■



Noble was only 17 years old when she first met Johnson. "I nearly got killed," she says. It was a different story in later matches, like this one, when Kay won with relative ease.

WHO WAS THE STRON

Why Ada A



Lo raine Johnson (right) knees Ada in stomach, forcing her to release armlock. "You must do that sort of thing when you're in the ring with Ash," Johnson says, "or she'll break your bones."

She was a circus strongwoman who could drive spikes with her bare hands and then yank them out with her teeth. She could lift a horse and take the impact of a sledgehammer on her stomach. And any woman who stepped into the ring with Ada was truly taking her life in her hands.

GEST GIRL WRESTLER?
sh, Of Course!

By PAUL DEMEREST

The full page newspaper ad blared in bold type: "SEE ADA ASH—WORLD'S STRONGEST WOMAN! Watch Ada Wrestle a Big 10-Foot Alligator . . . See Ada When She Wrestles A Big 500-lb. Black Bear . . . See Ada Break a 2x4 With Her Bare Hands . . . See Ada Pull Spikes and Drive Them Into a 2x4 With Her Teeth!"

And the people who were attracted by that newspaper ad and who showed up at the Columbus, Ohio, Fairgrounds for the big Fourth of July extravaganza were awed by Ada Ash as she did everything exactly as advertised

Ada, up to a few years ago, also wrestled other women. This, as she put it, "was like eating a piece of cake compared to holding open the jaws of a full grown alligator."

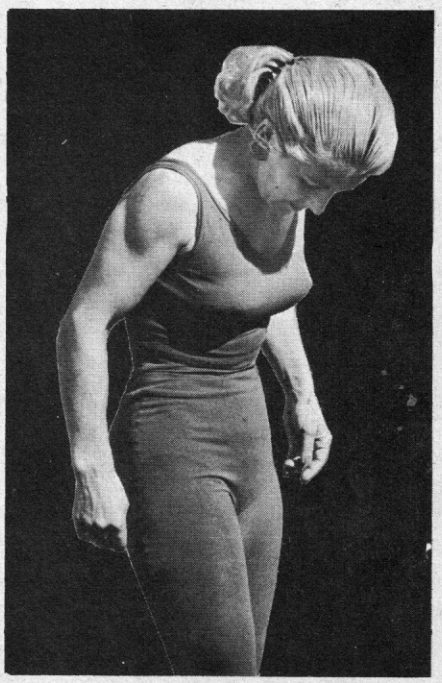
The late Billy Wolfe, who knew more about girl wrestling than anybody who ever lived, and who "invented" the sport, once admitted that Ada easily could have crushed to death any opponent she ever faced. He said his greatest fear was that Ada "might squeeze too hard and snap a girl's backbone or break her neck." Then Wolfe added, with a grin, "She could have put us all out of business."

But Billy taught Ada restraint and kept warning her never to seek revenge, no matter what fouls her opponents might commit. "I told Ada," Wolfe said, "that she had the power of life or death in her hands—just as if she were carrying a gun or a knife."

Of course there were times when Ada really had to fight herself to keep from letting go. One night in St. Joseph, Mo., while wrestling an opponent she chose not to identify, Ada said, "She whacked me on the bridge of the nose, which is probably the tenderest spot on my whole body. I saw stars and when the stars went away I just lost control of myself for an instant. She must have sensed what had happened and instead of running out of the ring, as she should have done, she tried to fight me off by throwing punches at my face. I saw the punches coming, but I didn't feel them and I just plowed in after her. I grabbed her by the hair and yanked her into a headlock and squeezed."

Ada bit her lips as she recalled the frightening incident. "As I squeezed her head I forget where I was. But I knew what I wanted to do. Billy

? CAN GIRLS BE STRONG



They sure can . . . very strong! And any girl or woman who wishes to become much stronger will be interested to know about our unique "Woman's Physical Culture Club" with its own monthly pictorial club paper. In it you'll find articles on strong girls, news about other members, instructional articles (written specially for girls and women) to make you much stronger, firmer, and develop your body magnificently.

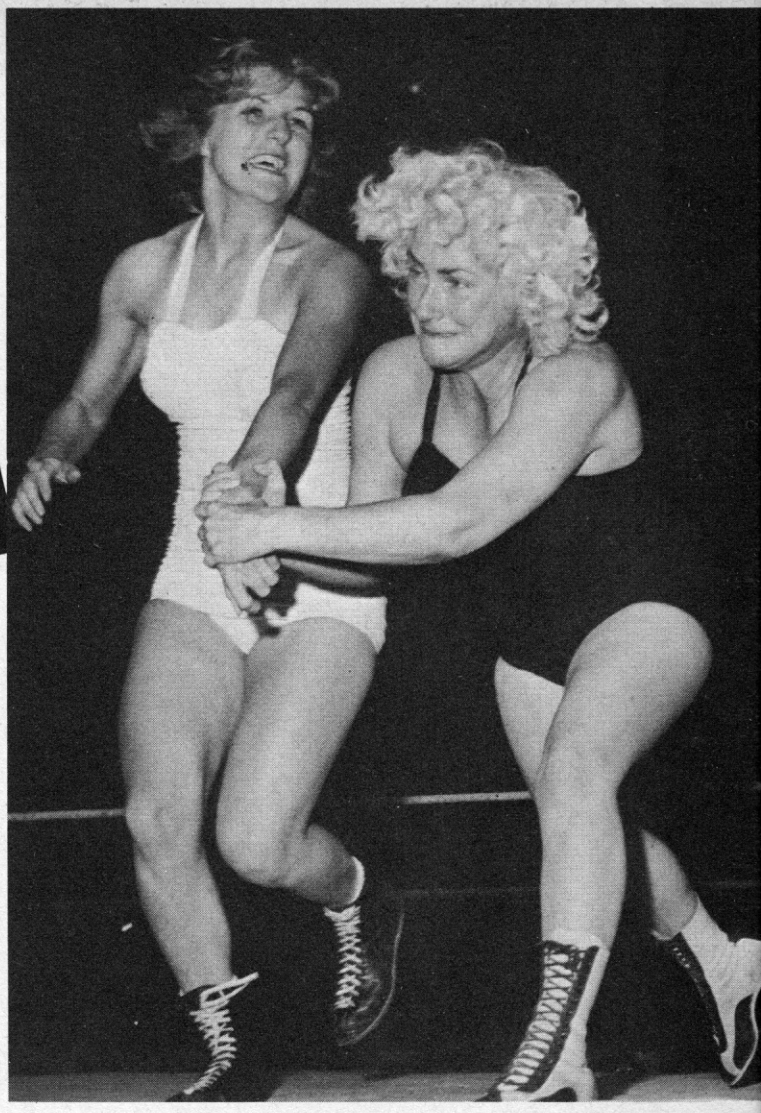
The only club of its kind in the world. Men, too, will enjoy the club's publication with its extensive photographic coverage. To get acquainted simply mail just one dollar for an introductory copy of the club's monthly plus complete information (mailed to you per first class mail, in plain envelope, right away!).

The WPC Club
3336 Papago Station
Scottsdale, Arizona 85257

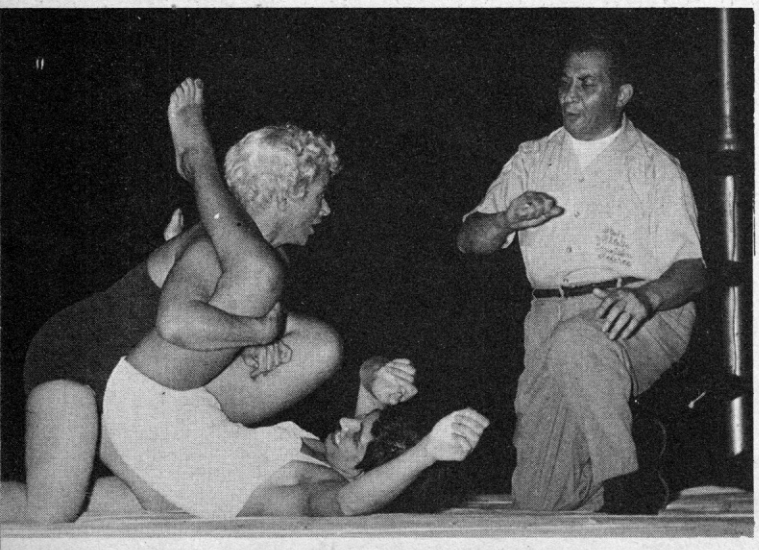
Wolfe must have known, too. He had been watching the bout from the rear of the arena, as he always did when I was in the ring. But the instant I got that headlock, Billy, who was my manager, ran down to ringside and began yelling, 'Take it easy, Ada. Just take it easy, girl.'

"I heard him very clearly, but the words were meaningless to me. Billy didn't hesitate for a second when he saw that I was going for the kill. He jumped into the ring and grabbed my hair and pulled back my head as hard as he could.

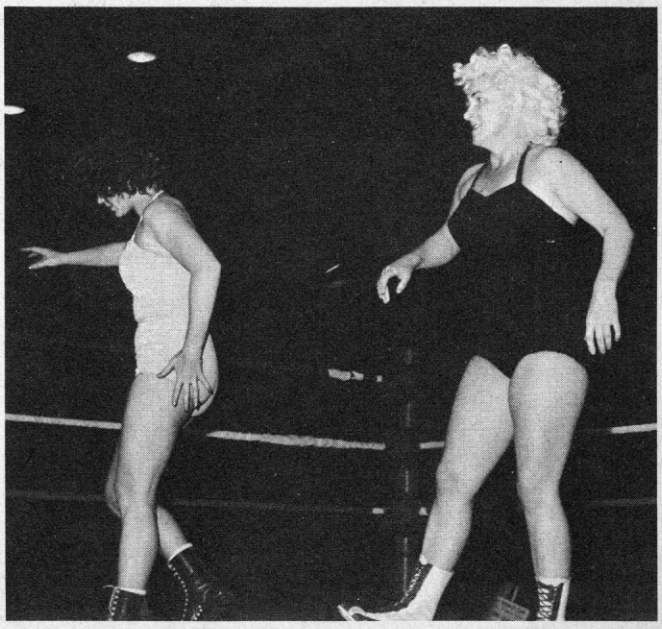
"This broke the hold and I started to spin around on my heels. I screamed in anger as I tried to focus my eyes on that other girl. But Billy drove his shoulder into my stomach and knocked me into a corner. Then he slapped my face again and again to snap me out of it. All the while he



The brilliant Sharon Lass (left) is whipped into ropes by Ash. When shown this photo, Sharon recalled, "I felt like my arm was in a vise as soon as Ada grabbed it. And I went sailing as if shot from a catapult. She never knew her own strength."



Ada barks at referee that she has already pinned Raymonde Coty, but official said no, so she pinned her again.



Ada proudly throws out her great chest after scoring fall on Sharon Lass in match at Waterloo, Iowa. Lass walks dejectedly back to her corner to rest and await bell for next fall.

stood directly in front of me so that I could not see the girl and he kept yelling at her, 'Get the hell out of here!' She left—in a hurry."

There were other times during her wrestling career when Ada Ash came dangerously close to committing murder. "That was one reason I kept retiring," she said with a chuckle. "But I usually made a comeback the next night."

Ada is short (five feet), and in street clothes she looks like an ordinary, somewhat heavy-set woman. But her arms and legs are like steel. Press your finger as hard as you can into her bicep or thigh and it will curl.

Professional male wrestlers used to put headlocks around Ada's head and neck and try to whip her to the mat. But Ada, with a mighty lunge, would send them reeling drunkenly into the ropes.

"Strength is a tremendous asset to a wrestler," Ada says in her high-pitched voice, "but timing is almost as important. I did things that look impossible for any other woman to do, but I could never do some of them unless I combined timing with strength."

Ada will tell you that the most powerful woman she ever wrestled was the immortal Mildred Burke. "Mildred had terrific legs," she explains, "and she was very, very fast. One night in Tennessee, when we were going at it like our lives depended on the outcome, she caught me with a flying tackle and smashed me into a corner post.

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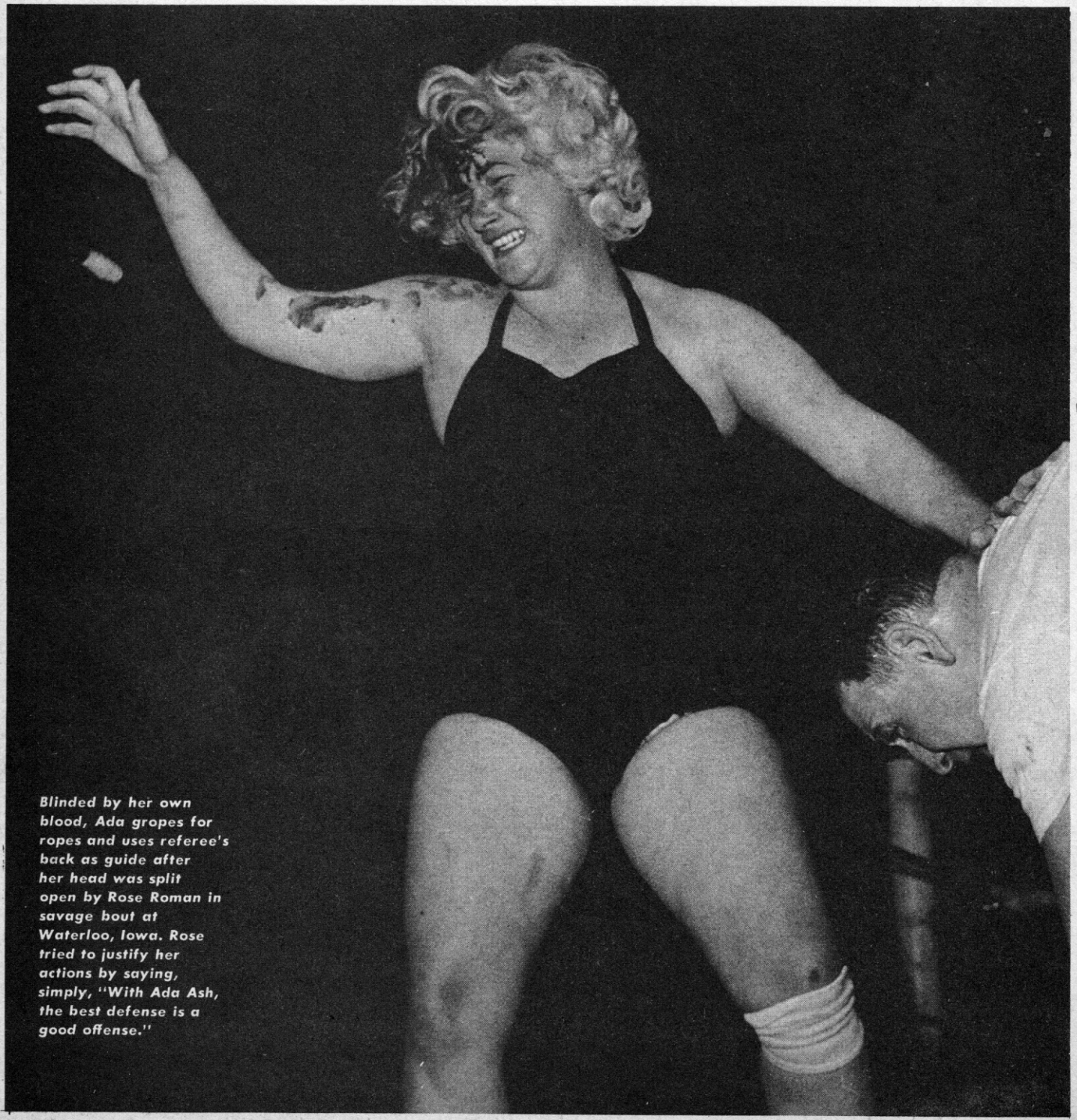


Blinded by her own blood, Ada gropes for ropes and uses referee's back as guide after her head was split open by Rose Roman in savage bout at Waterloo, Iowa. Rose tried to justify her actions by saying, simply, "With Ada Ash, the best defense is a good offense."

This was first publicity photo taken of Ada. She hates the picture and says of it, "I didn't even know how to comb my hair, or how to pose. I wish I could buy every one of those pictures so I could burn them!"

I bounced off and landed on my face. I was groggy and she tried to get in a headlock. But I knocked her off and rolled out of the ring to get time to clear my head.

"I was fine when I got back in and we started to circle each other, looking to get a hold. She got her left foot a little close to me and I figured I'd try for a leglock. So I reached down, but before I reached the target, the leg was gone. I straightened up, and Mildred was gone, too . . . She had gotten behind me and the next thing I knew I was sitting on the floor and she had me locked pretty good in a body scissors. And let me tell you—when Mildred Burke wrapped those legs of hers around you, you were in real trouble."

Ada worked for a number of years as a circus strongwoman, and her big act was lifting a horse and the wood platform on which the animal was strapped. The total weight came to about 1,500 pounds, depending on how much the horse had consumed. One day the horse evidently ate too much and when Ada lifted him, the strain on her body was greater than ever before. A few minutes later, she blacked out. When she snapped out of it, she had another souvenir of her fantastic feat —a heart murmur.

"I'll never lift that much again," she said. "Now that I've set a record, let somebody else try to break it." And she never tried to better that record. Others have tried, but the nearest they have come was 78 pounds fewer than Ada's mark.

Some years ago, Ada was wrestling in St. Louis. She thinks her opponent was Nell Stewart. "But it really doesn't matter," Ada says sadly. "It wasn't her fault."

Tearing loose from a headlock, Ada somehow lost her balance and fell out of the ring. She didn't fall particularly hard, but it must have been the position in which she landed that did the damage. At any rate, Ada just lay there while the referee counted.

They carried Ada back to the dressing room on a stretcher. The house doctor couldn't help her, so they took her to a hospital where, after an examination, they said she had suffered paralysis of the back.

Ada asked how long it would be before she could walk. The doctor tried to break the bad news as painlessly as possible, but it boiled down to "maybe never."

Superwomen like Ada Ash don't quit easily. "I took an oath right there in the hospital that I'd walk again—and wrestle again, too."

It took her two-and-a-half years to keep her vow . . . thirty harrowing months of sweat, pain and toil. When she was fully recovered, Ada was asked to appear on a coast-to-coast CBS-TV show called *Welcome Travelers*. Ada dramatically explained the years of torture and then, to prove that she really was fully recovered, she hammered a heavy spike into a board with her bare hand, then yanked out the spike with her teeth. The studio audience gave her a tremendous ovation, not so much for her remarkable feat of strength as for her indomitable courage.

Touched by the warm response, Ada went further. She bridged her body on the floor, and ordered a heavy rock placed over her stomach. Then her husband, a professional wrestler named Al Szasz, smashed the rock to pieces with a big sledge hammer.

Getting up, Ada slipped on her robe, walked close to the TV camera which had been recording every detail and said proudly, "And they told me that I would probably never walk again. Let this be an inspiration to all of you who doubt that there is a bright tomorrow. Never lose hope. Never lose courage—and faith."

It is regrettable that a woman like Ada Ash never really devoted herself completely to professional wrestling. When she first started in the business, she was determined to win the world championship. But as the years passed and she found that her other activities, particularly her animal acts, demanded so much of her time, she accepted fewer and fewer wrestling engagements.

"There were periods when I went more than a year without a single bout," Ada recalled. "Perhaps it was a mistake. Perhaps I would have been champion had I really put my heart and soul into it. But it would have meant sacrifices that I wasn't prepared to make. I don't regret how things turned out."

But we do, Ada. We feel that wrestling was deprived of a star—and champion—at least as good as, if not better than, the immortal Mildred Burke. And we don't mean that in the past tense. You're still the strongest woman in the world, Ada. Why not try another comeback? If you agree. we'll gladly decorate the next cover of GIRL WRESTLING with your fabulous body. And that's a promise. ■

BETTY ANN SPENCER Continued from Page 27

time . . . But honey, this gal's not complainin'. I like that loot and what it'll buy."

Betty Ann Spencer's taste for loot is reflected in her wardrobe: "I got one of the finest aroun'. I'm a pretty woman an', quite naturally, I gotta have clothes that are worthy of beautiful me."

She also finds loot useful in soothing the bumps and bruises she gets in the ring: "The soreness goes away when I put a nice green money poultice on it."

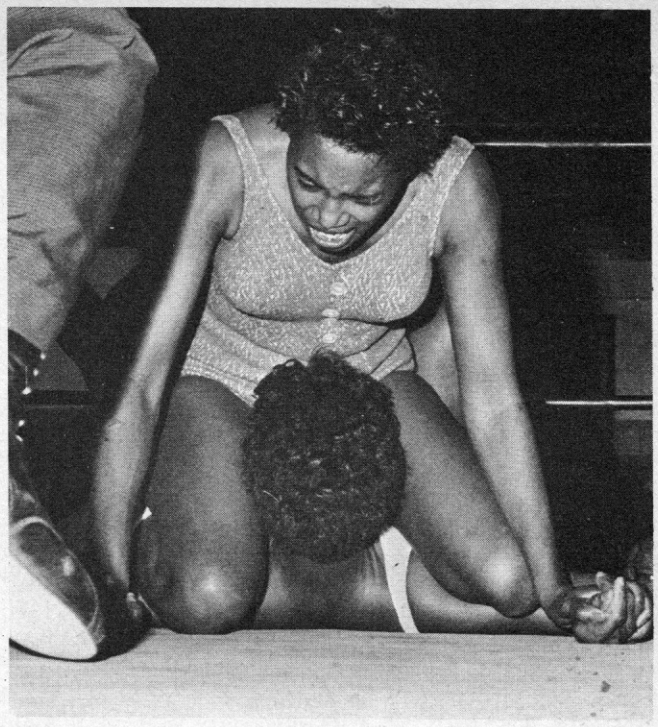
Betty Ann, who is 28 years old, refused to disclose how much loot she makes from wrestling. "Don't you worry none 'bout that, honey. Just put your mind at ease. Betty Ann's doin' all right.

"Now I don't want to give nobody the idea that this life ain't nothin' but grits and gravy. I won't tell you no lies, honey. I got just 'bout everything broke that can be broke. I'm okay now, but I've been throwed out of the ring, an' had fans try to do me harm. Wrestlin's more dangerous than workin' in a bar an' grill an' that's mighty dangerous for a pretty woman like me.

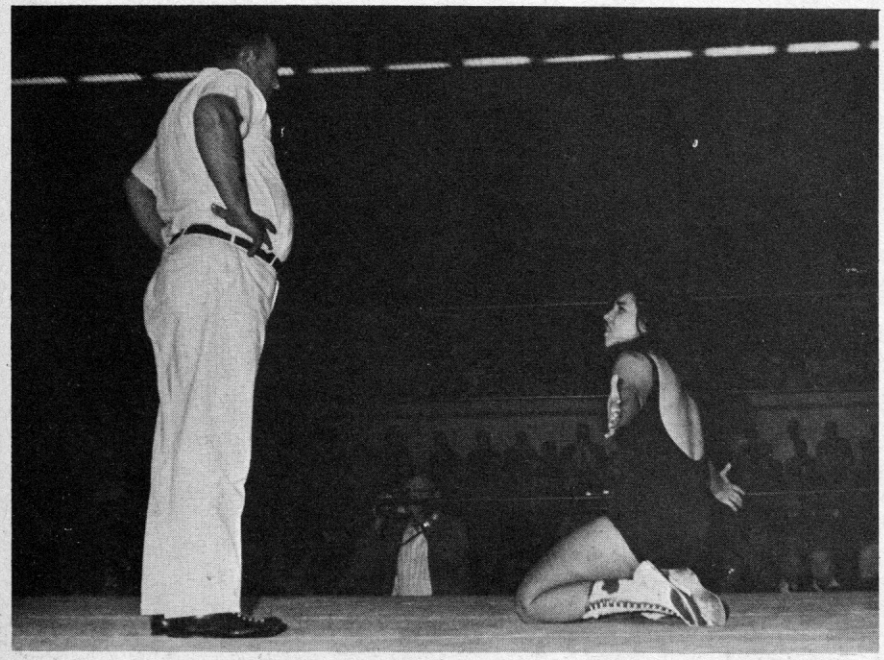
"I got into wrestlin' 'cause, man, I had to do *somethin'* different to make it for my kids. I got married when I was 16. Then Carol came along, then Shirley Ann and then Frankie Lee. Carol's 10 now; Shirley Ann's 8, and little Frankie Lee's just 6.

"I wanted them to have a college education—but how's a waitress gonna manage that? Well, I'd been goin' to the matches in Atlanta for years. I was sittin' there one night, watchin' the girls wrestle, when it came to my mind—pow!—why don't I make some of that lovely bread?

Continued on Page 56



Despite all her bluster about what she was going to do to Sweet Georgia Brown, this is how Betty Ann Spencer wound up.



Toni Rose was the picture of frustration when she learned she had lost to Banner after eight minutes of furious action. "What happened?" she asked the referee.

TONI ROSE Continued from Page 17

their worry. As long as they pay to watch, I'm satisfied. Boos and catcalls just make me work that much harder.

"Sure I'm mean in the ring. I admit it. I'm in this for the money, and it doesn't do a bit of good for me to be nice about it. Looking out for No. 1 is what'll make me champion. Being 'nice' sure as heck won't, will it?"

Penny Banner, for one, thinks Toni has what it takes to capture the world title. "She's starting young, and she'll make it," says Penny. "She's not only rough, she's also anxious and hungry—and those are pretty good weapons to have when you start in this business."

Toni has been pleased with her progress thus far. "I got into this sport for the challenge," she says, "and I haven't been disappointed. When I told people I wanted to be a professional wrestler, they told me I was crazy. My uncle even had the nerve to suggest that I see a psychiatrist.

"But I know what I want and I know what's best for Toni Rose. This is my life. It's rough and it's living out of suitcases. But I haven't backed out yet. And I don't intend to. Like I said, I want to be on top. And I'll do anything to get there."

Anything?

Toni gives you that disarming look and grins, "Well, *almost* anything." ■

BETTY ANN SPENCER Continued from Page 55

"All this time I'd been fightin' off customers in those bars for the kinda money that jingles, an' here was a deal where I could make some of that quiet money—the kind that rustles—for whippin' some little ol' gals. That did it . . . I made up my mind . . ."

"But Betty, you promised to tell us how you're going to handle Sweet Georgia Brown. What about . . ."

Betty Ann's face grew stern. "Never interrupt a lady when she wants to talk," she scolded, adding: "Not this lady, anyway—or I'll forget I'm one.

"Anyway, I'd been goin' out with a wrestler—no sense givin' that bum free publicity by tellin' his name—an' I told him what I wanted to do. He took me to Paul Jones, the promoter in Atlanta.

"Paul's a nice man. He saw I wasn't jivin' him an' he sent me to Boston to see Billy Graham, one of the best wrestlin' teachers in the whole country.

"I worked out with Billy an' I tell you, he showed me no mercy. After one week, my beautiful body told me to quit an' go home. But I ain't the quittin' kind. I got guts as well as good looks.

"I stayed in Boston for over six months, gettin' beat up but learnin' somethin' with every bump. Then one day Billy told me I was ready, an' the next thing I knew I was booked to wrestle Alma Mills, the baddest woman wrestler you ever seen.

"That Alma Mills like to beat me to death. She turned me every way but loose! Oo-e-e-e, did she rake me over them hot coals! I was lucky to get outta that ring alive. Took me a week just to get outta bed.

"I said to myself: 'Girl, you gotta meet Miss Mills again—an' beat the daylights outta her. That's just what I'm gonna do, too, if we ever meet again.

"Anybody ain't seen me wrestle, they missed it all. Ask any promoter I've ever wrestled for. They'll tell you Betty Ann the best thing ever happened to wrestlin'. That is, they will if they gonna be truthful 'bout it.

"I try to get rid of every opponent as fast as I can. I go out an' show 'em who's boss right off the reel. Wrestlin's just like life—you gotta go out an' *take* what you want. Life's cruel unless you know how to bite back at it. I didn't always know how to bite back, but I learned . . ."

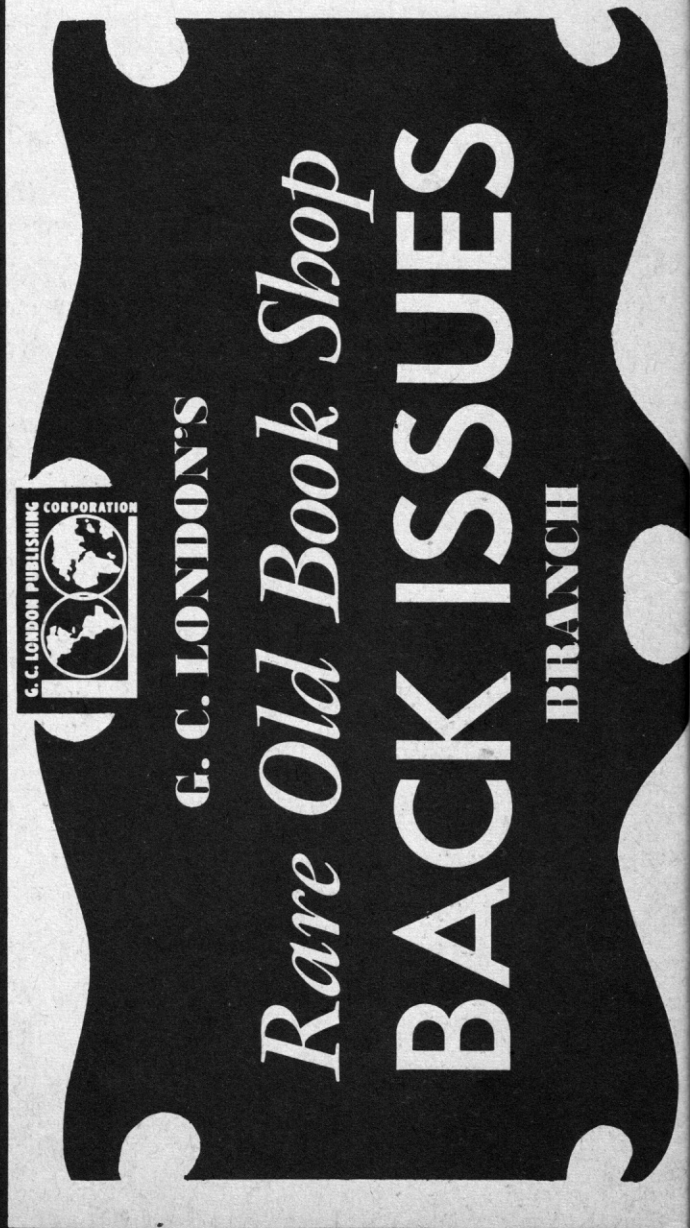
Betty Ann paused and chuckled. "That Sweet Georgia Brown's gonna learn somethin' tonight, too—only she won't like it one bit . . ."

This was what we'd been waiting for. "How are you going to whip her?" we asked quickly.

"That's easy," Betty Ann said. "First I'm gonna dazzle her with my good looks—then I'm gonna shake her up like a chocolate malted . . ."

"But don't you have a battle plan—a secret weapon, maybe?"

The question had come too late. Betty Ann's name was called and she strode out to meet Sweet Georgia Brown. The pictures accompanying this story show how she made out. ■

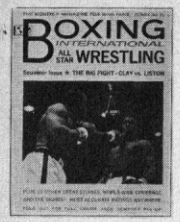


Issues of every magazine published by G. C. London Publishing Corp. are like fine wine and rare gems in that they increase in value with each passing day. Already the first issue of BOXING INTERNATIONAL (Dec/1964) is being hoarded by collectors all over the world. In fact one dealer of rare books in Boston ordered 150 copies just, as he put it, "to store them away for a few years until collectors will gladly pay up to ten dollars a copy."

Why not take advantage of that Boston dealer's experience and complete your collections while the issues are still available at the original price of 50c per copy? You'll be making a wise investment.

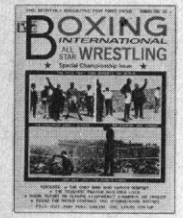
BOXING INTERNATIONAL—ALL STAR WRESTLING

(Highlight Articles Listed)



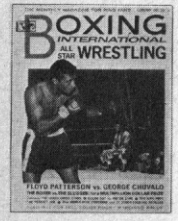
DEC/64

DECEMBER 1964 — Brilliantly-written history of the lightweight division, accompanied by list of every fight ever fought in which the title was at stake, showing date, place, principals, etc. . . . *Dressing Room Drama . . . Doomsday for the Jinxed Champion . . . The Most Brutal Fight of Modern Times . . . The Story of Young Stribling . . .* And in the Full Color Pin-Up, Jack Dempsey. WRESTLING FEATURES: Ray Stevens, The Clawman, The Bastiens, Fabulous Moolah, Linda Carroll.



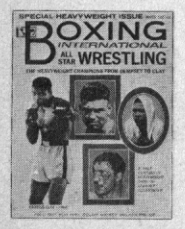
JAN/65

JANUARY 1965—The fascinating story of the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries heavyweight championship fight in 1910, with many spicy facts never before revealed, illustrated with rare photos . . . *Tribute to the Bulldog . . . The Only Man Who Ever Kayoed Jack Dempsey . . , Tom Sharkey's Ear . . . Marciano's Abdication . . . The Toughest Fighter Who Ever Lived . . .* Full Color Pin-Up of Joe Louis. WRESTLING FEATURES: Fred Blassie, Paul Jones, Bruno Sammartino, Waldo Von Erich, Joe Blanchard, Jessica Rogers.



FEB/65

FEBRUARY 1965—*The Year* (1964) *In Review . . . Death Watch With Bobo . . . America's Oldest Fight Club . . . My Plan to Save Boxing,* by Archie Moore . . . *They Called Leach Cross A Faker . . . Master Of the Left Jab . . . Revenge for Sugar Ray . . . Greatness in Our Time . . . The Transformation Of a Heavyweight . . .* Full Color Pin-Up of Rocky Marciano. WRESTLING FEATURES: Dory Funk, Jr., Mike Harmon, The Bruiser, Lou Thesz, Ramon Torres, Big Jim Grabmire.

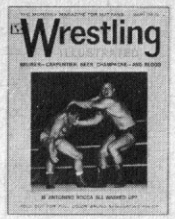


MARCH/65

MARCH 1965 — A sparkling 25-page section devoted exclusively to the heavyweight champions from Jack Dempsey (1919) to Cassius Clay. Beautifully illustrated, with almost one hundred historic photographs, and presented in a unique, easy-to-read design. We believe this issue of BOXING INTERNATIONAL is the finest boxing magazine ever published . . . Full Color Pin-Up of Mickey Walker. WRESTLING FEATURES: The Executioners. Reg Parks, Doug Gilbert, Stan Stasiak, Fabulous Moolah, Princess Little Cloud.

WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED

(Highlight Articles Listed)

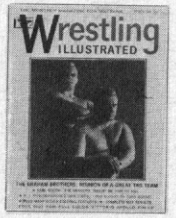


JAN/65

JANUARY 1965 — *Why Bruiser Can't Forget This Match . . . Gene Kiniski Tells Why It Pays to Be an S.O.B. . . . John Paul Henning's Greatest Fear . . . Eddie Graham vs. Bob Orton—With Boxing Gloves! . . . Why Buddy Rogers Had to Retire . . . Billy White Wolf's Two Lives . . . The Return of the White Tornado . . . The Curious Decline of Antonino Rocca . . . The Midget With Tall Ideas.* Full Color Pin-Up of Bruno Sammartino.

FEB/65

FEBRUARY 1965—*Lou Thesz Names The Man Who Will Probably Win My Title . . . What Really Goes on in Those Dressing Rooms? . . . Remember Gene Stanlee? . . . Blondes Drive Me Wild, says Luis Hernandez . . . The Destroyer Stretches His Luck . . . How to Break Into Wrestling . . . Is It True What They Say About Jerry Kozak? . . . Behind The Glamor* (Eddie Graham & Sam Steamboat) . . . *A Valentine For Taro.* Full Color Pin-Up of Pepper Gomez.

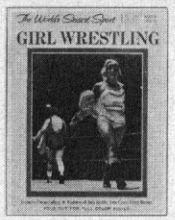


MARCH/65

MARCH 1965—*The Graham Brothers: Reunion Of A Great Tag Team . . . Karl Gotch: The Snakepit Taught Me How To Kill . . Tribute to Larry Chene . . . Bulldog Brower Goes Too Far . . . Andy Robin, the Canny Scot . . . Don't Throw It, Arnold! . . . That Fifth Rocca-Buddy Rogers Match . . . Tough Way to Go to Sleep* (Bruiser vs. Ramon Torres) . . . *The Spook From Bounty Gulch . . . Tar and Feather Job.* Full Color Pin-Up Of Vittorio Apollo.

GIRL WRESTLING

(Highlight Articles Listed)



WINTER/65

WINTER/1965—*Berniece LaRue says Men Drive Me Crazy . . . Ann Casey—The Panther Girl . . . How Much Can a Girl Take?* asks Karen Kellogg . . . *Torrid Texas Tamale—Margaret Garcia . . . The New Madam X . . . The Night Penny Banner Lost Her Head . . . Do Women Wrestlers Risk Breast Cancer? . . . June Byers' Finishing School For Girls . . .* Judy Grable Tells *Why I Hate Moolah . . . I Did It For Kicks.* Full Color Pin-Up of Penny Banner vs. Nell Stewart.

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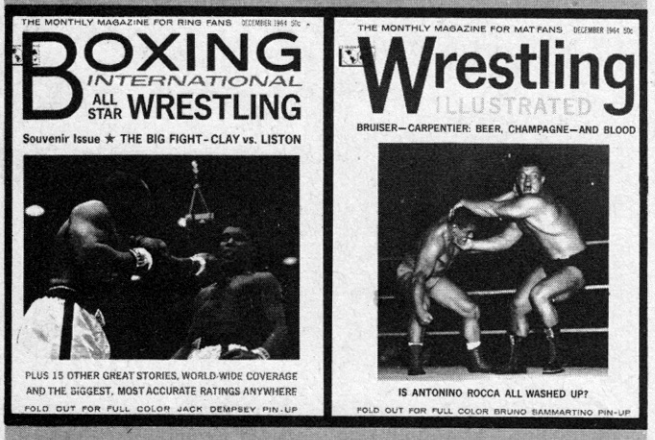

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FRAN GRAVETTE

Continued from Page 10

antics of Latin wrestling fans, I was blistered for being oversensitive. *Oversensitive?* That's a laugh. I was hurt plenty by those lunatics—a dislocated thumb, broken ribs, a split head . . . My blonde head turned red the night my head was busted open. It took eight stitches to close the wound.

But these injuries were "minor," if I can call them that, compared with the spinal hematoma I suffered. Who gave it to me? Mexico's own pride and joy, Rita Cortez, that's who! Hematoma is a Latin word for a tumor or a swelling containing blood. It doesn't sound like much, but let me tell you, I wouldn't wish that kind of pain on anybody.

The swelling developed after that hellcat Cortez threw me over the top rope and I landed on my back on the ring apron. I was in such agony I had to lie on my stomach for a month after I was hospitalized. The doctors couldn't operate right away—they were afraid to. They thought I might have had a blood clot in my spine.

When the doctors finally yanked that mass of blood out of my back, it was the size of a large grapefruit. They feared I would be permanently paralyzed and ordered me to quit wrestling. But I refused and a few months later I was back in the same ring. Guess who my opponent was? Rita Cortez!

I never wanted revenge so much as I did that night. All during the time I'd lain on my stomach in that hospital bed, I thought of ways to knock that Latin tortilla flat on *her* back. That's exactly what I did, too—flattened her with a dropkick that rattled her teeth. Just to make sure she stayed down, I kneedropped her from the top rope. The referee could have counted to a hundred.

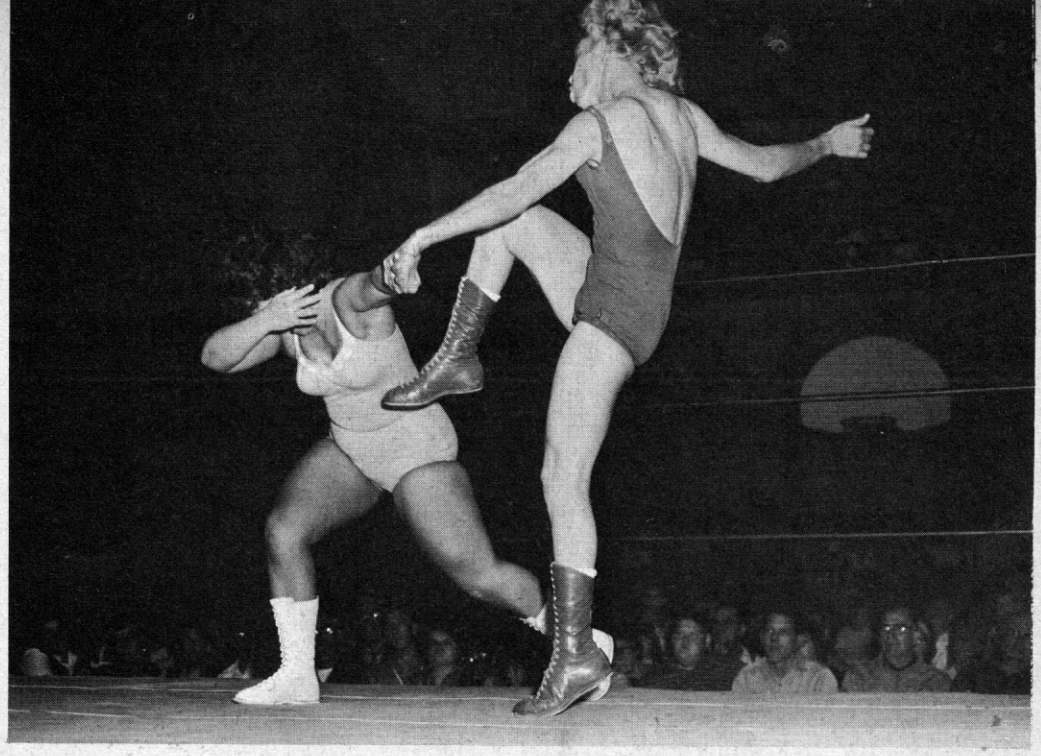
Oh, I can be rough when I have to. Some people think I'm frail. They can't understand how I can cope with big, hefty gals like Verne Bottoms. But anybody knows it takes more than muscle to be a success in wrestling.

Looking at me now, would you ever believe I weighed over 150 pounds? Well, I did. Before I went into wrestling, I was only 118. I had joined a judo club in Calgary, Canada, run by Hiro Kanarchairo, a Japanese Black Belt expert who was teaching the art to Calgary policemen.

Hiro taught me to kill an attacker with my bare hands. I worked out in his gym for two years. The work must have agreed with me because I began to look like a lady Bruno Sammartino. Now, muscles are fine. But after all, I didn't want to lose my femininity. So I got down to 135 pounds.

When I finished Hiro's course, I felt I was ready to become a professional wrestler. It was something I'd wanted to do ever since I'd seen the great June Byers wrestle Elvira Snodgrass in Little Rock, Ark. My father and I were visiting relatives in Little Rock and, for a treat, he took me to the matches.

I was only 15 years old when I saw June defeat her powerful opponent. That incident changed the entire course of my life. I've always been a bit



When Verne Bottoms (left) tried to set Gravette up for flying tackle, Fran side-stepped beautifully and brought the side of her foot up against Verne's ribs. Note great contrast in size of their legs.

suspicious of people who say that, but here I go, saying the same thing.

I didn't see Byers wrestle again until four years later, when she came to Calgary with her husband, TV announcer Sammy Menacker, a former wrestler who managed her career. This time I saw her on television. The next day, I called her.

I was afraid she'd give me the brushoff. But she turned out to be a tremendously warm and gracious person and I was thrilled when she suggested that I come around for a chat. I'd made up my mind to become a wrestler and knew that June would be just the person to advise me on how to get started.

I'd tried going to Calgary Business College but, frankly, the mere sight of a typewriter made me ill. So, when I saw June, I mentioned my ambition. What a wonderful woman she is! She never cracked a smile at the idea of a skinny 118-pounder going in for the roughest, most dangerous sport in the world.

She heard me out, then said: "I like your spirit, Fran. But it will take a lot of work to achieve your goal. First you'll have to build up your body." She gave me a list of exercises, and even worked out with me until her Calgary tour ended.

"Keep in touch," she said. I did.

Meantime, I joined Hiro Kanarchairo's judo club. As I said, after finishing his course, I felt it was time to make my move. I was just about to get in touch with June, who was in Indianapolis at the time, when a local referee changed my mind.

That referee, Nick Harris, had been telling me about promoter Buddy Lee. He was so insistent that I contact Buddy that I finally consented. Lee asked me to pay him a visit in Columbia, S. C. I did. He must have been impressed when I showed him what I could do because he sent me on a tour that lasted five years.

Except for my experiences in Puerto Rico and Mexico, it was a great five years. I had traveled a long way from Medicine Hat, Canada, where I'd been born on my father's 3,500-acre ranch.

Dad had inherited the ranch from my grandfather, Rudolph, who emigrated to Canada from Arkansas in 1906. A town in Arkansas, incidentally, is named after my grandfather, only it's pronounced GRA-vette instead of Gra-VETTE.

When my mother died, dad leased the ranch in Medicine Hat and moved to Calgary so that my brother and sisters and I could go to school. I had always been athletically inclined and took up sports in high school, where I played softball and basketball, making the city all-star teams.

Physical competition has always added zest to my life. I don't know what I'd do without it. I hungered for it so much that I even defied my dad, whom I love, when he tried to prevent me from becoming a professional wrestler.

We had some stormy scenes, but I wouldn't budge. We didn't speak or correspond for over two years. Dad still isn't reconciled to my wrestling. But at least, I am now welcome in his home on the few occasions when I have time to visit him.

I've never regretted my decision. Wrestling is a very rewarding sport. But it has its drawbacks, too—the constant traveling . . . the one-night stands in strange towns . . . the overwhelming loneliness. For a woman, it's especially tough.

I crave a husband, children, a permanent address. But there's still plenty of time for all that—after I win the championship. Then I'll settle down in the States somewhere—much as I love Canada, I'll want to live in America—and start hunting for a mate.

No, he won't be a wrestler. I want to make sure I'll marry someone who can't "beat" me! And, oh yes, another thing: no Latins need apply. If one comes wooing, he'll get karate instead of kisses! ■

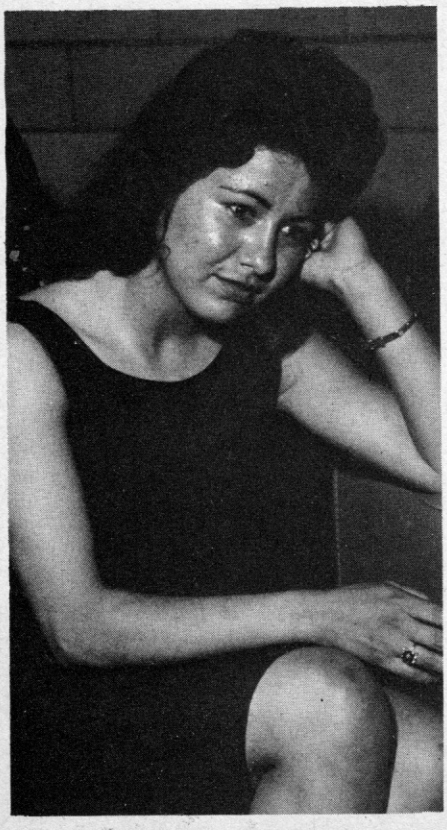
Bouquets AND Brickbats

WANTS NEW FACES . . .

Sirs:

Congratulations on being the first to publish a magazine for which I've waited 15 years. But please give us more stories about the young newcomers and less of such old timers as Moolah, Byers, Grable, etc.

MARCEL VERNT
Quebec City, Canada



MARGARET GARCIA
. . . a plea for progress

THE STARS WRITE

Sirs:

I thoroughly enjoyed the first issue of GIRL WRESTLING (Winter/65) and didn't lay it down until I'd gone from cover to cover. I'm sure it will be a great success for I've a hunch that many fans buy wrestling magazines just to get what little information they publish about us girls. I'm rooting for you all the way!

PENNY BANNER
Atlanta, Ga.

Sirs:

Only one thing disappointed me about the first issue of GIRL WRESTLING—you didn't have a story about little ol' me in it. Being written about in your magnificent magazine is as important to a girl wrestler as getting an okay by Dun and Bradstreet is to a businessman. So *please*—don't forget me next time.

MAE GOODNER
Nashville, Tenn.

• We didn't, Mae. See page 39.—ED.

Sirs:

Congratulations on your wonderful new magazine. Not only are the stories fascinating, they're 100% accurate. Especially the one about Fabulous Moolah and me *(Why I Hate Moolah,* Winter/65). As you wrote—and contrary to popular notion—I don't actually despise Moolah. There are, in fact, many people whom I like less. And if you'll give me about six months, I'll think of one.

JUDY GRABLE
Tampa, Fla.

Sirs:

At long last a magazine dedicated exclusively to girl wrestlers! It's the best thing anyone has ever done for us. Unfortunately there has never (up to now) been enough written about us and what we stand for—the most exciting brand of wrestling in the world. And yet many states are so behind the times that they will not permit professional girl wrestling. But now the fans who can't see us in the flesh have the next best thing — GIRL WRESTLING Magazine. *Salute!*

MARGARET GARCIA
Seguin, Texas

SWEET BAIT

Sirs:

I'm sure that you've received many compliments on your truly outstanding magazine, but let me add mine: The sensational photos cut from your first issue now occupy a prominent place on the walls of my candy store, and the full color pin-up is on display in the front window. If they don't give my customers an appetite for more sweets, I don't know what will.

C. L. TITUS
St. Louis, Mo.

ABOUT TIME

Sirs:

I was thrilled when I saw GIRL WRESTLING on the newsstands, and doubly so when I read its contents. It's about time someone came out with a magazine devoted entirely to the girls. Hope to see some stories—and a full color pin-up of my favorite, Fran Gravette, in future issues.

CHARLOTTE IRVINE
Springfield, Mo.

• You're in for another thrill, Charlotte. See page 8.—ED.

. . . WANTS OLD FAVORITES

Sirs:

I loved the first issue of GIRL WRESTLING and will treasure it always. Now I'm looking forward to future issues and I hope you'll continue to give us stories of our old favorites—Fabulous Moolah, Judy Grable, Margaret Garcia, Penny Banner, Nell Stewart. To me, they're the most. And so is GIRL WRESTLING!

JEANNE LeCLAIRE
Detroit, Mich.

• Which proves that you can't please all of the people all of the time. But we'll keep on trying.—ED.

NOT A WOLF

Sirs:

Please don't misunderstand—I'm not a wolf, or anything like that. But when I saw that swimming pool shot of Ann Casey *(The Panther Girl,* Winter/65), I reared back and howled like a loco lobo. Va-va-voom!!! What a gal! And you know something? I, a Scotsman, would have given a year's pay to be that motel manager. Needless to say, I'm hoping you'll bring beautiful Ann back again, with more—many more—pictures. Ouuuuuuuuuuu!

DAVID BYRNES
Seattle, Wash.

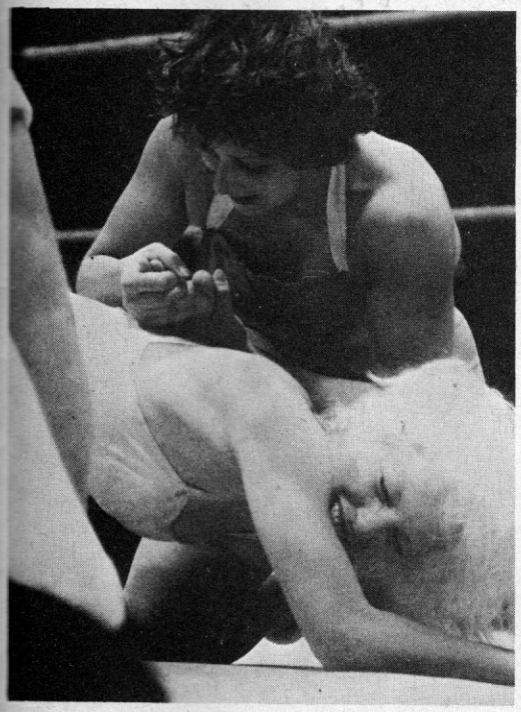
• Howl away, friend. Then turn to page 34.—ED.

THE GREATEST

Sirs:

I doubt that anyone will dispute my opinion that Mildred Burke was by far the greatest girl wrestler of all time. As such, it follows that she deserves a full length feature in the greatest mat magazine of all time—GIRL WRESTLING.

EDDIE GARGAN
Houston, Tex.



PAT SHERRY (down)
. . . season's sensation

MONOPOLY ON BEAUTY

Sirs:

Want to glamorize GIRL WRESTLING even more? Do a story—with pictures—on Pat Sherry. Although a newcomer, Pat has been the sensation of the season. And best of all, from a male viewpoint, she's a beauty. You wouldn't go wrong, either, by doing an article on Rita Cortez. To my mind, these two living dolls have wrestling's good looks concession all wrapped up.

HOWARD WRIGHT
Boston, Mass.

LOVES THE GALS

Sirs:

I've been a close follower of girl wrestling for many years, and as far as I'm concerned, the only worthwhile wrestling show is one that includes at least one match between the ladies. Not only do these gorgeous examples of femininity provide eye-appeal, they never fail to give us fans a special kind of excitement. Long live the girls—and long live the best tribute ever given them, GIRL WRESTLING!

RONNIE PARSONS
Manchester, Mass.

LOOKING FORWARD

Sirs:

The only complaint I have is that GIRL WRESTLING is available only four times a year. It was delightful seeing Lorraine Johnson again, even behind bars *(Call Out the Paddy Wagon!,* Winter/65). I haven't seen or read about Lorraine in over a year and was wondering what had happened to her. And my No. 1 favorite — Berniece LaRue — made a welcome return in Shelby McGraw's terrific article, *'Men Drive Me Crazy!'* I look forward to seeing more of LaRue and Lorraine—and of my other favorites, Toni Rose, Nell Stewart, Penny Banner, Karen Kellogg, Betty Ann Spencer and Etta Charles—in future issues of the most interesting and unique magazine I've ever seen.

J, GILES
Pearl River, N. Y.

PATIENCE REWARDED

Sirs:

For a long time I have made monthly treks to the newsstands to look through the various wrestling magazines, primarily to see which carried the most stories about girls. Most had none; a few had one or two. After years of this meager diet, I came across the first issue of GIRL WRESTLING and nearly did a jig right there on the street. Now, after reading—no, devouring is a better word—the magazine from cover to cover, I join the legions of girl wrestling fans in thanking you. We've waited a long time for this, but our patience has been well rewarded. Now if G.W. will come out on a monthly—or even bi-monthly—basis, it would be Christmas six —or twelve— times a year.

JOHN HUDEK
Newport, R. I.

ACTION PREFERRED

Sirs:

GIRL WRESTLING was okay and I enjoyed most of it. However I'd like to have seen more action pictures and a more comprehensive description of the matches, like the Penny Banner-Nell Stewart story. Personally, I couldn't care less about how the girls diet or exercise, or whom they date. The only thing that interests me is what they do in the ring.

THOMAS L. GRADY
Tucson, Ariz.

FEELS CLOSER

Sirs:

Though I've never had the pleasure of meeting Berniece LaRue, Karen Kellogg, Margaret Garcia and Marlene Parker, GIRL WRESTLING's articles made me feel I know each one personally. The stories were outstanding character studies and I, for one, hope you'll keep on giving us that "inside stuff." I can think of no better way of making us feel closer to the stars we cheer for.

MARIE FARQUHAR
Washington, D. C.

ON THE RATINGS

Sirs:

I can't agree with your ratings. For example, how can Fabulous Moolah be rated any place but No. 1? I closely follow the mat results published in GIRL WRESTLING's sister magazines, BOXING INTERNATIONAL and WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED, and have yet to see where Moolah has lost a single match. And surely Princess Little Cloud, who has been mopping up the opposition from Canada to Texas, deserves better than the No. 7 post.

BILLY JOE HARRIS
El Paso, Tex.

BOOST FOR THE LITTLE GALS

Sirs:

Only one thing kept the first issue of GIRL WRESTLING from being perfect—you completely ignored the girl midgets. For sheer entertainment, give me little gals like Darling Dagmar, Baby Cheryl, Diamond Lil and Doll Paige, any time. They may be tiny, but don't all good things come in small packages?

ROY WEEKS
Lexington, N. C.

• If you'll turn to page 11, you'll see we're in complete agreement with you. —ED.

A CALL TO ARMS

Sirs:

Through these, the pages of our own magazine, I call on everyone who loves to see beauty in action to demand that girl wrestling be legalized in *every* state in the union. Why should we be fed a constant diet of hairy, blubbery males, while folks who live in progressive states have their wrestling menus spiced with zest and pulchritude? It ain't fair and we should start barraging our legislators with letters demanding equal treatment. Let's go, gang!

HAROLD SCHWARTZ
Brooklyn, N. Y.

MILLIE ZEC

Continued from Page 31

She took the children with her and summed up the future this way: "Now I want only to wrestle and to raise my children."

Millie, who will become eligible for American citizenship in October, trains harder than any male wrestler. She works out four to five hours a day in the gymnasium with heavy barbells.

"I never believed that a woman could lift the amount of iron Millie does," says Promoter Bob Clay. "She can lift 300 pounds without trouble."

Her greatest problem is to find women to train with. "They no want to go on mat with me," she said sadly. So Millie told Bob Clay that she wouldn't mind training with men. Clay arranged for her to work out with three top male professionals, who prefer to remain anonymous.

Said Bob Clay: "Normally, when a woman tells me that she wants to break into girl wrestling, I give her June Byers' address and tell her to write June and perhaps arrange to attend her wrestling school in Texas. But I wasn't about to let Millie get away. She can wind up being the greatest woman wrestler of all time—even greater than Mildred Burke."

Millie Zec is still training for her American debut. She's lifting those weights and tossing 250-pound male wrestlers around the gymnasium. We think that Judy Grable, Moolah, Penny Banner and the rest of our top stars are in for the shock of their lives the first time they feel Millie's vise-like legs clamp around their bodies. Her velvety white skin hides muscles of steel.

Millie sums her future up best of all: "I know American girls very good. But I have more to fight for than they do."

We don't know about that, honey, but we sure do know that you have more to fight with! ■

PENNY BANNER

Continued from Page 46

"Neither one of us would think of quitting. I know I wouldn't ask Penny to quit. She likes what she's doing. And if she didn't, I'm sure she's smart enough to know what to do. We both agree that if you can't take it, then you shouldn't start in the first place.

"Really, our way of life isn't so bad. We're never apart for more than a week, and the only drawback is that we can't be in our own home with Wendi."

If there is any professional jealousy in the Weaver "household," Penny doesn't give any indication of it.

"Any girl wrestler in a tight bathing suit automatically gets more publicity than a man," she says. "That's just the way it is. But Johnny knows that I always wish the very best for him, and it's a mutual wish."

Penny touches on her own life: "Today, a woman wrestler must wrestle on a man's basis. There's no such thing as a gal making it big with hair-pulling tactics. Most of the hair-pullers are out to make a fast buck. But usually they end up with a broken leg and you never hear from them again. To me, wrestling is a challenge, and I would have it no other way." ■

ANN CASEY

Continued from Page 37

Ann leaves dressing room to greet her son, Larry. She calls him "my best press agent." He is also the joy of her exciting life.

sonality, though, is the big goal: the championship of the world. "I know what I can do," Ann said. "I don't want to sound brash, but I know I'll have that belt around my waist one of these days."

You'll have to admit that the belt couldn't adorn a nicer-looking figure.

Casey realizes that it takes more than beauty to succeed in the rugged world of wrestling. It takes talent, too. Luckily, she has both.

"In this business," she said, "beauty and popularity are related and it's the good-lookers who get the publicity—and the money."

I asked Ann if her youth had handicapped her in any way. She thought for a moment, then said: "No. Youth is good to have on your side. But you need experience, too—and energy.

"If you have youth and experience, all well and good. But if you don't have energy, you might as well pack up and go back to the farm."

The door to the little room opened and Larry the press agent poked his head in. "Hey, mom, you ready for this girl now?"

Ann looked at me, and I nodded that I was finished with the interview. As I reached for the doorknob, Casey said:

"You know something? The finest moment for me is when my opponent is lying helpless on the mat and the crowd stands up and cheers. I get goose bumps all over when the fans do that. Golly, I could kiss every one of them out there."

I stole one last quick glance at Ann Casey . . . at her white suit . . . the figure, trim and tanned, and the beautiful face . . . Then I walked out and closed the door.

I wonder if she heard the applause with the door closed . . . ■

June Byers Tells About

The world ex-champion had some wild battles in her 18-year career. But the one she remembers best is the one that almost made her cry.

By JACK FLETCHER

My Toughest Bout

The diamond on her finger was as big as a robin's egg. Sleek, ash-blonde June Byers rubbed it absent-mindedly as she smiled sweetly at her visitor and said: "My toughest bout? You must be kidding. They've **all** been tough." Then she winked to show that she was kidding.

"My toughest bout..." she mused. "That shouldn't be so hard to pinpoint, should it? After all, no matter how long you've been wrestling there's always one particular match that stands out...the one you remember as if it had happened yesterday...

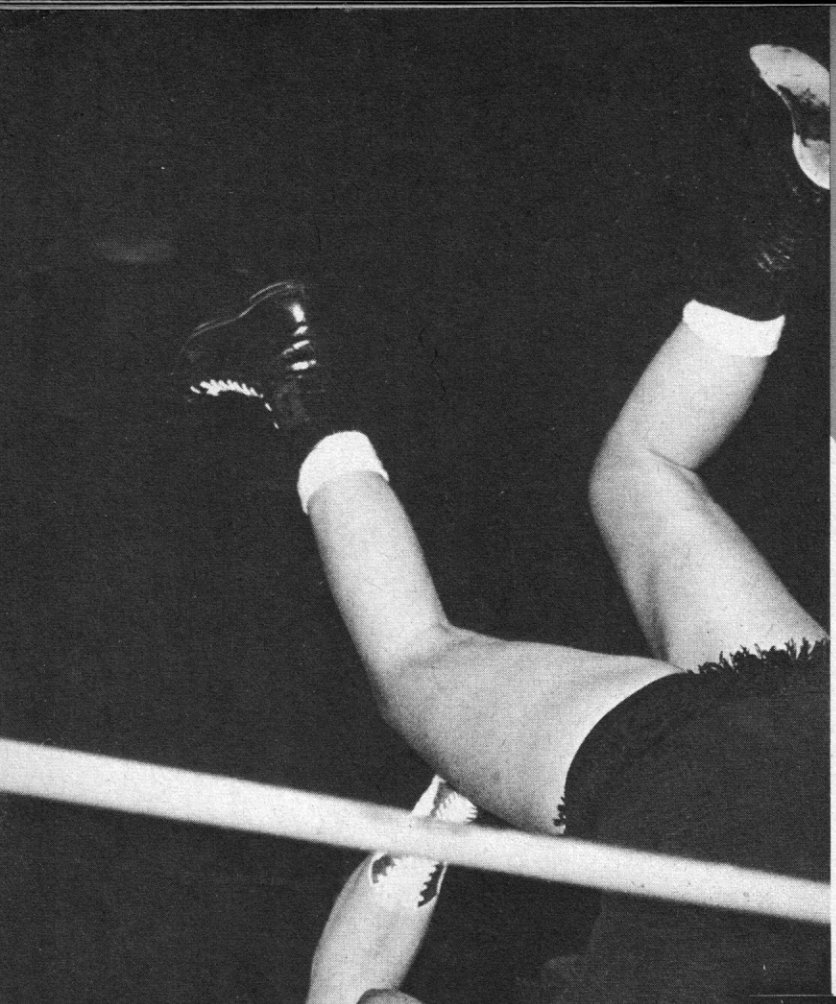
"But there have been so many memorable battles—and I don't mean that sentimentally, either—with Penny Banner, one of the best in the business, and Verne Bottoms and, oh, scores and scores of others...

"But I guess if I were pinned right down, I'd have to say that in all my 18 years of wrestling, I've never met anybody like Mildred Burke. She was the greatest. What a champion! I wanted to beat her in the worst way—and when I did I almost cried."

Continued

Mildred Burke, shown here in her prime, had been champion of the world for 16 years when June Byers challenged her reign.

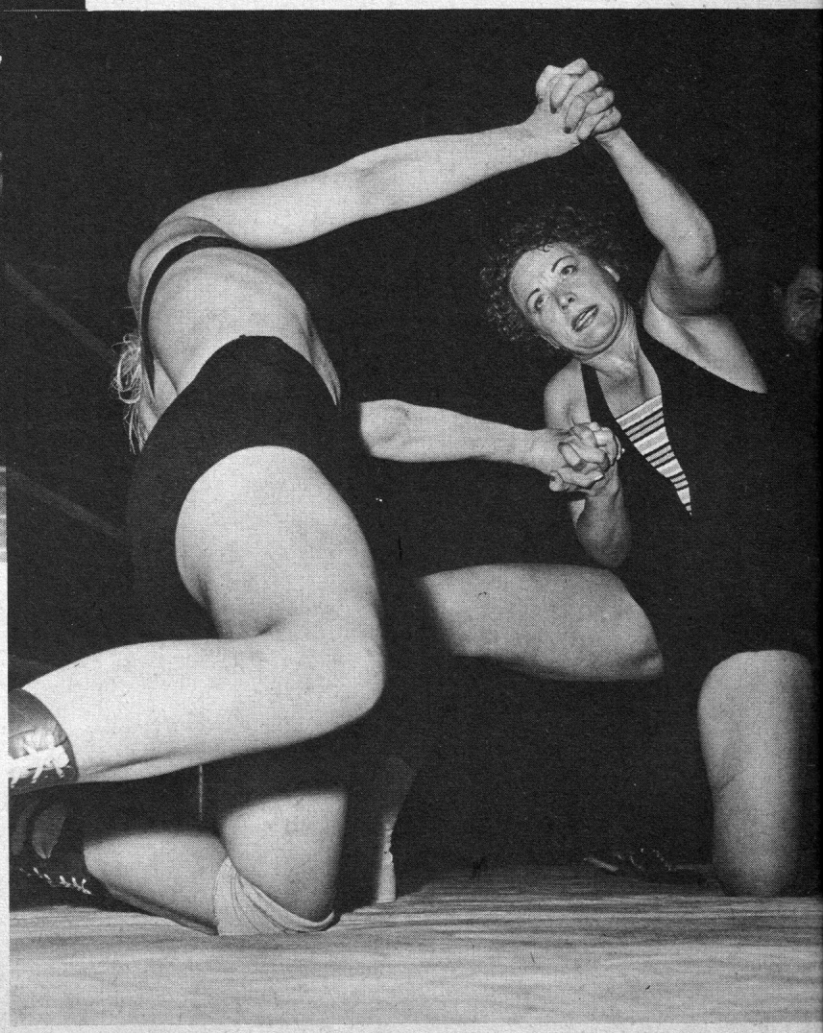
'I wanted to beat Mildred in the worst way...'

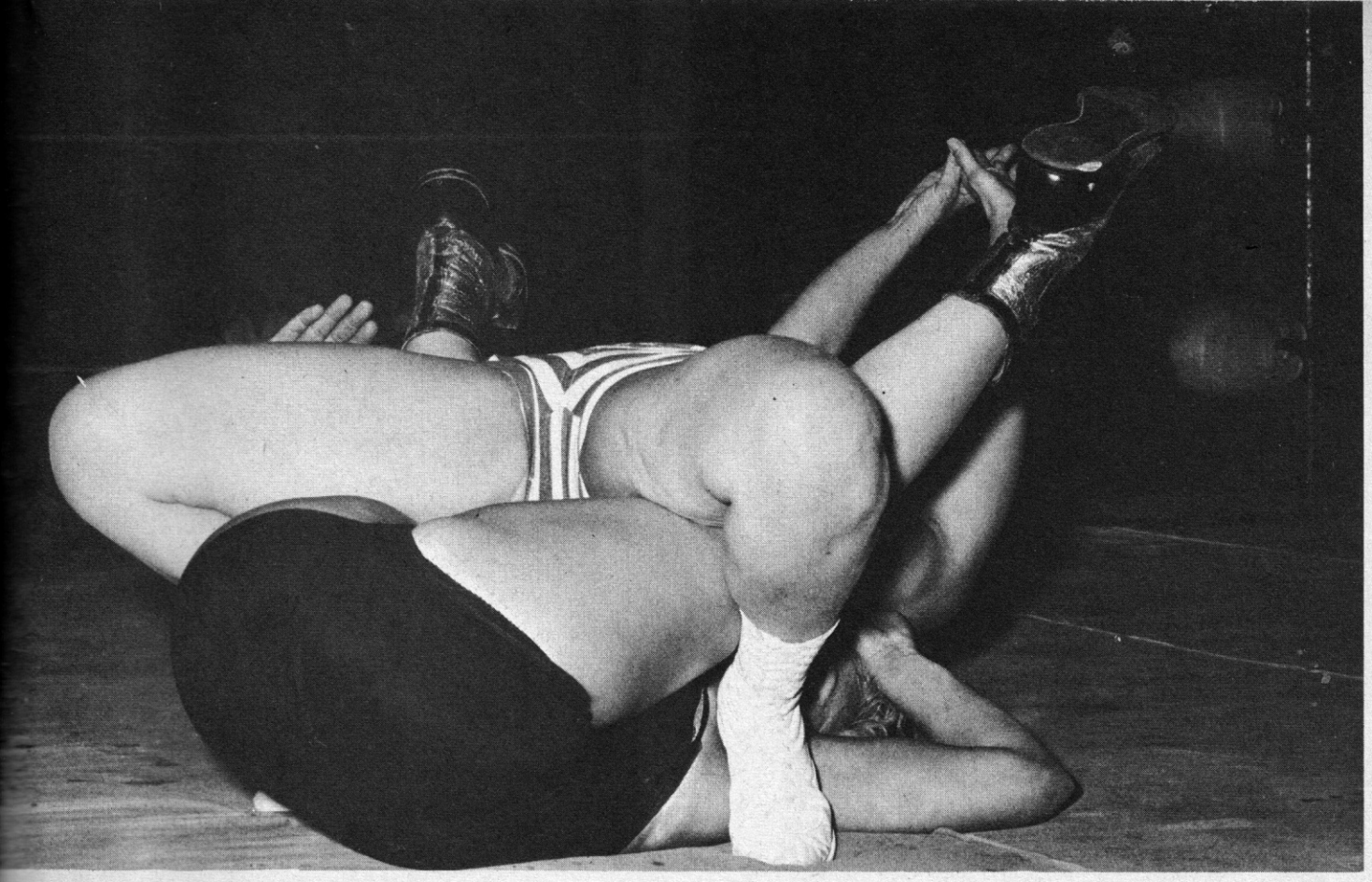


One of June's most effective finishers is her famed "Byers Bridge," which she uses here (photo at right) on Penny Banner after stormy session at Amarillo, Texas.

June (right) fought some rugged foes after she won the crown. Perhaps the toughest was her former protege, Penny Banner, now a topflight performer in her own right.

June was just a kid battling the tomboys on her block when Mildred (left) was clobbering all opposition. Though Byers didn't know if she'd ever get a title bout with Mildred, she trained for 1½ years preparing for it.





Blue-eyed Mildred Burke, a 5'2", 130-pound dynamo, had reigned for more years than most people could remember. When she ran out of female competition without a single defeat, she challenged—and beat—a long string of tough male opponents.

"I'll quit wrestling when I get licked," she boasted. And she was true to her word. But she lasted 18 years—16 of them as champion—and it took another great performer, June Byers, to turn the trick.

June had been working toward that goal even during those dark days when nobody believed she'd ever make good. She had run into one defeat after another and friends begged her to quit and go back to her job as lab technician with the Texas Oil Company.

But Byers had stubbornly refused. Behind her were years of hard training—first under the tutelage of her uncle, the famed light heavyweight "Ottawa" Roberts, and then at the University of Texas.

Though the university lacked a female wrestling team, June made up for it by working out with—and defeating—members of the male squad. Graduating with a degree in chemistry, she got a job with Texas Oil—but boredom soon set in.

To relieve it, June took in the wrestling matches in hometown Houston. She might have remained a lab technician had it not been for one explosive incident. It occurred when she charged toward the ring one night to bawl out a contestant for foul tactics.

The wrestler, "Krippler" Karl Davis, clobbered his opponent to the canvas and turned on June. "So you think I'm lousy, eh?" he grated. "Well, c'mon up here and let's see how good **you** are."

Byers leaped into the ring and gave Davis a thumping he'll never forget. The upshot was a bid to turn pro. She grabbed it and, after two years of broken-boned failure, started to carve out a reputation as a phenomenally colorful performer.

As the money flowed in, June—dripping with mink and jewels—felt like a queen. But something was missing in her glittering ensemble: the world crown perched on Mildred Burke's head.

Byers knew she'd have to be in peak condition to knock off that crown. So she started training four hours a day. And not just five days a week—but seven. She recalls: "At times I felt as if my arms and legs were going to fall off."

When she began this brutal schedule, Byers didn't even know if she'd ever get the match. Her sensational victories had generated public clamor for a title bout. But June couldn't seem to interest Mildred in a showdown.

Continued

In 1953, Byers won the American Women's Championship in a Baltimore tournament sponsored by the Maryland State Athletic Commission. Fifteen of the nation's outstanding girl wrestlers competed.

It was a smashing triumph—but June felt robbed because Mildred Burke had not appeared. After all, who cared about a championship recognized in only one state? Byers wanted the world title and wanted it badly enough to shed blood, sweat and tears.

It took her 1½ years to catch up with Mildred. Finally, on Aug. 28, 1954, in Atlanta, Ga., she got her chance. It was a hot, steamy night but that didn't discourage the spectators, who jammed the arena to the tune of $20,000. As eager as any of them were promoters and other wrestlers who had streamed in from all parts of the country to see the titanic battle.

Says June: "The minute I saw Mildred in the ring, I knew she had been training just as hard as I had. She had a bouncy, elastic quality about her and her skin looked as if it were bursting with vitality.

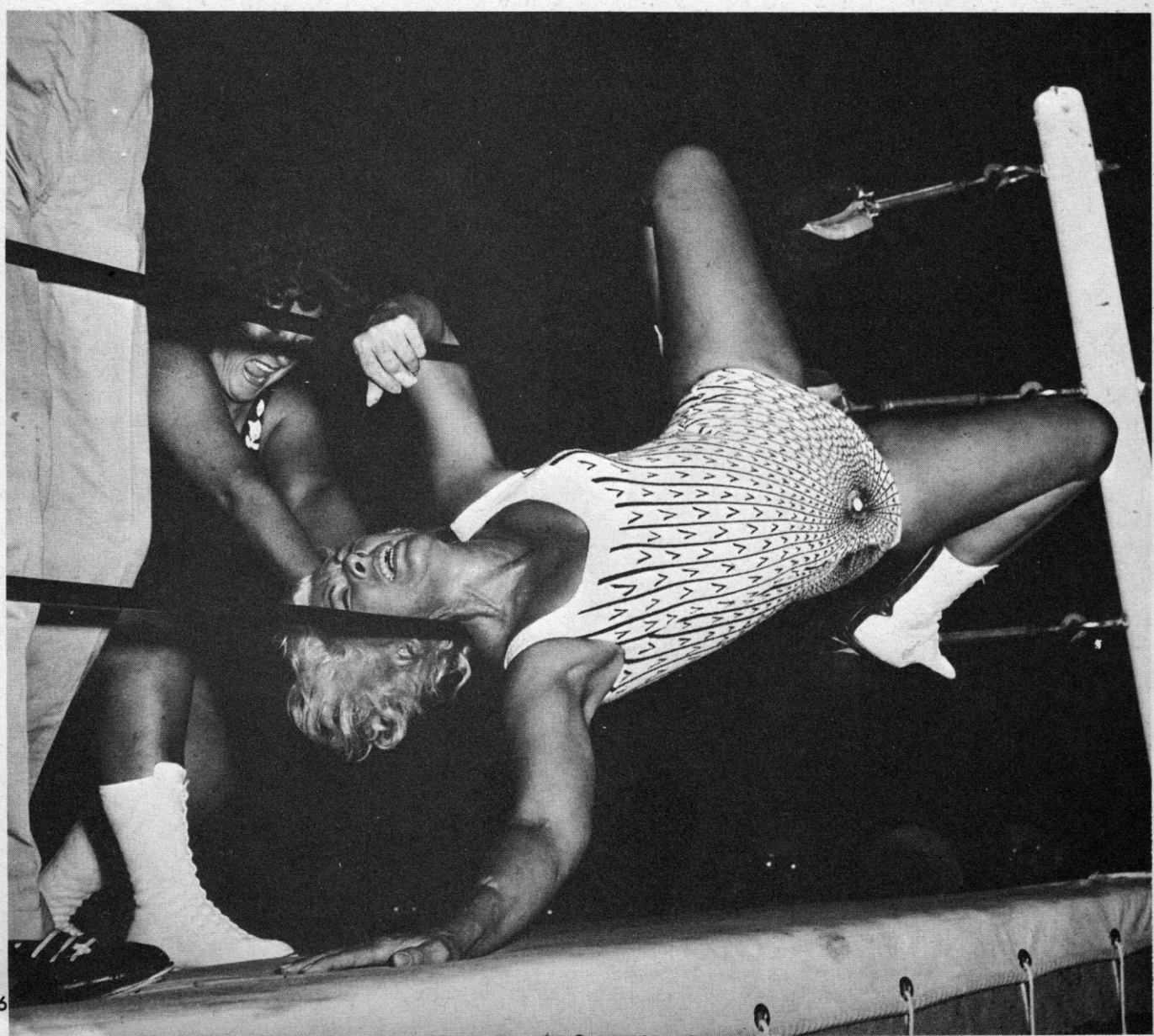
"It was a brutal match all the way. Mildred had regarded me as an upstart with too much lip because I'd been pressuring her for the match. And she used everything but the ring posts in an effort to beat me.

"For more than 20 minutes we wrestled like wildcats, spilling out of the ring and mauling each other on the floor, then scrambling back in to punch, kick and use every tricky maneuver we'd ever learned.

"I'd heard that Mildred had been starting to fade. If that was true, I never saw any evidence of it. She hammered me with tremendous body slams. I can still feel the pain when I rub my ribs a certain way.

Continued on Page 68

After a period of inactivity in Canada, June returned South to find the competition fiercer than ever. Verne Bottoms (left) gave her a sizzling time before June beat her twice in a row.



Continued from Page 66

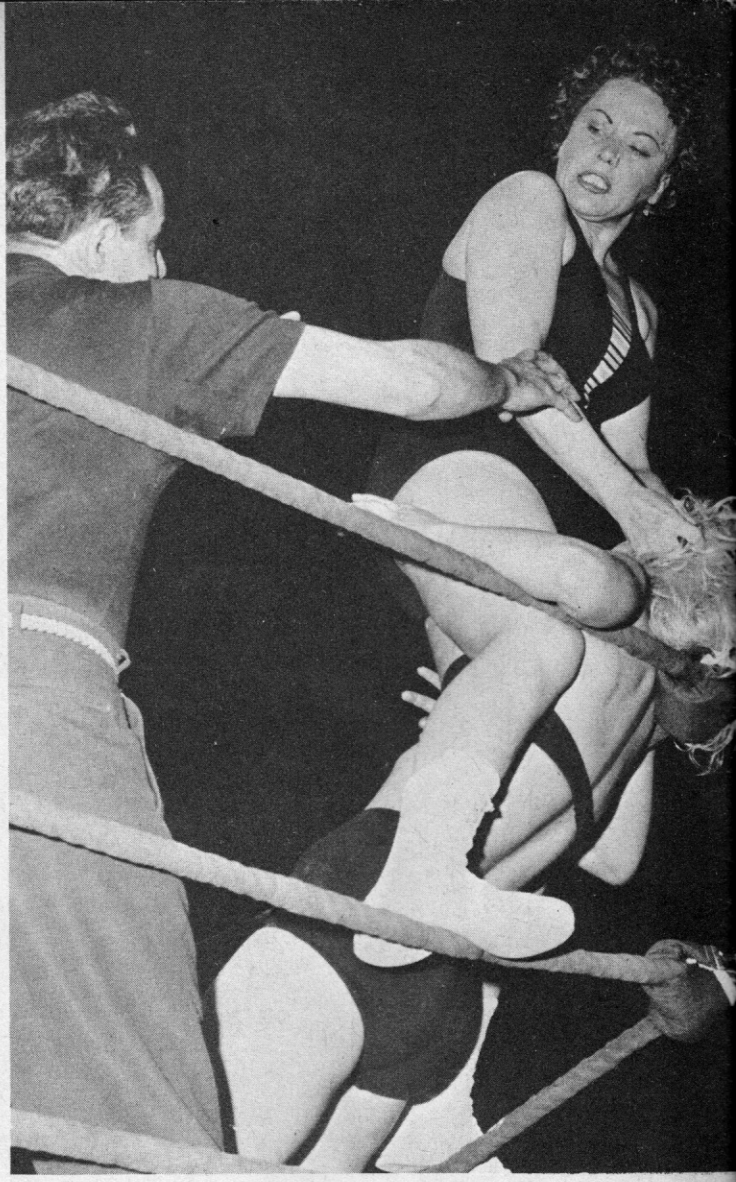
"We weren't in action for more than a minute when we were bathed in sweat, mixed with the blood trickling from cuts over our eyes. We kept up a blistering pace, and the fans loved it, roaring approval every time one of us got socked or floored.

"But as the bout wore on, I realized that Mildred was slowing up. I had won the first fall with a series of crushing body slams. Then I found it easier to get to her. But Mildred fought back savagely and for a while I though she was going to take all the starch out of me.

"Then I caught her bouncing off the ropes, smashed her into position for my Byers Bridge, in which I bend an opponent backward, and took the second and deciding fall.

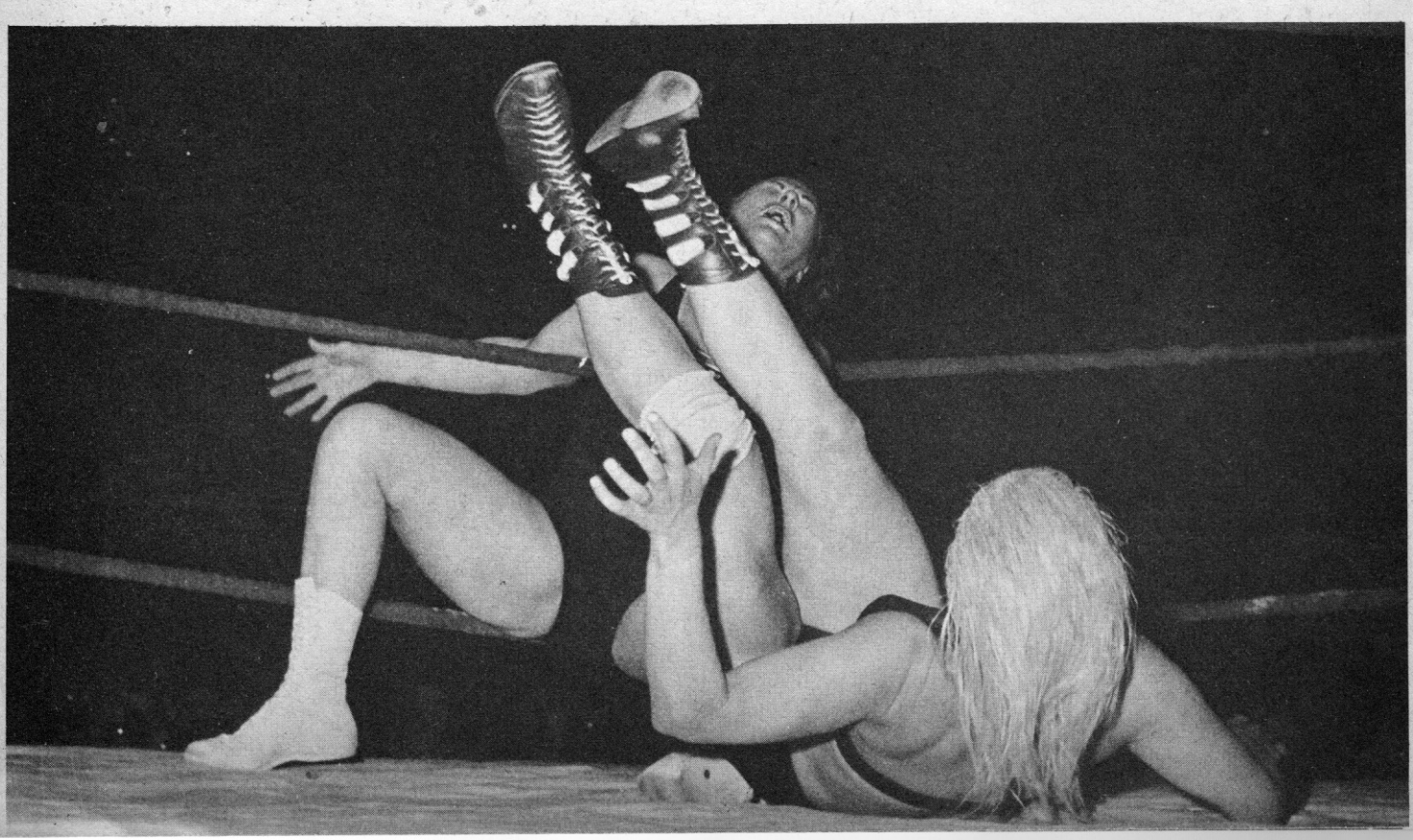
"Well, you never saw such a stunned reaction from the audience. They couldn't believe that the great Mildred Burke had finally lost her title. I couldn't believe it myself. It was the end of an era.

"A sad moment for Mildred . . . But a deliriously happy one for me. I should have been shouting with joy. But when I looked over at Mildred, shoulders sagging with defeat, all I felt like doing was bawling." ■



Some of June's battles with Banner are ring classics. Penny found that she still had a lot to learn from her old teacher.

But Byers didn't have easy sailing, as this photo shows. Penny, a quick learner, got more dangerous with each bout.



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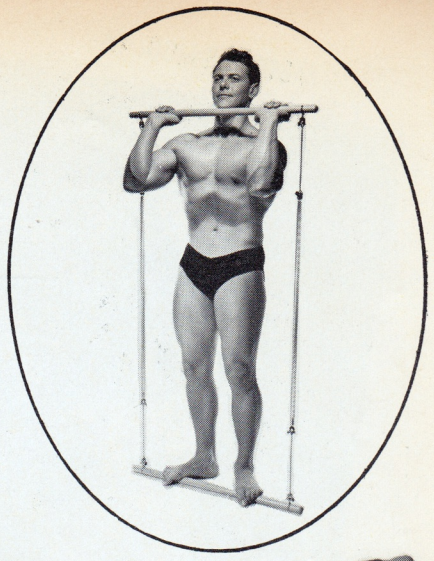

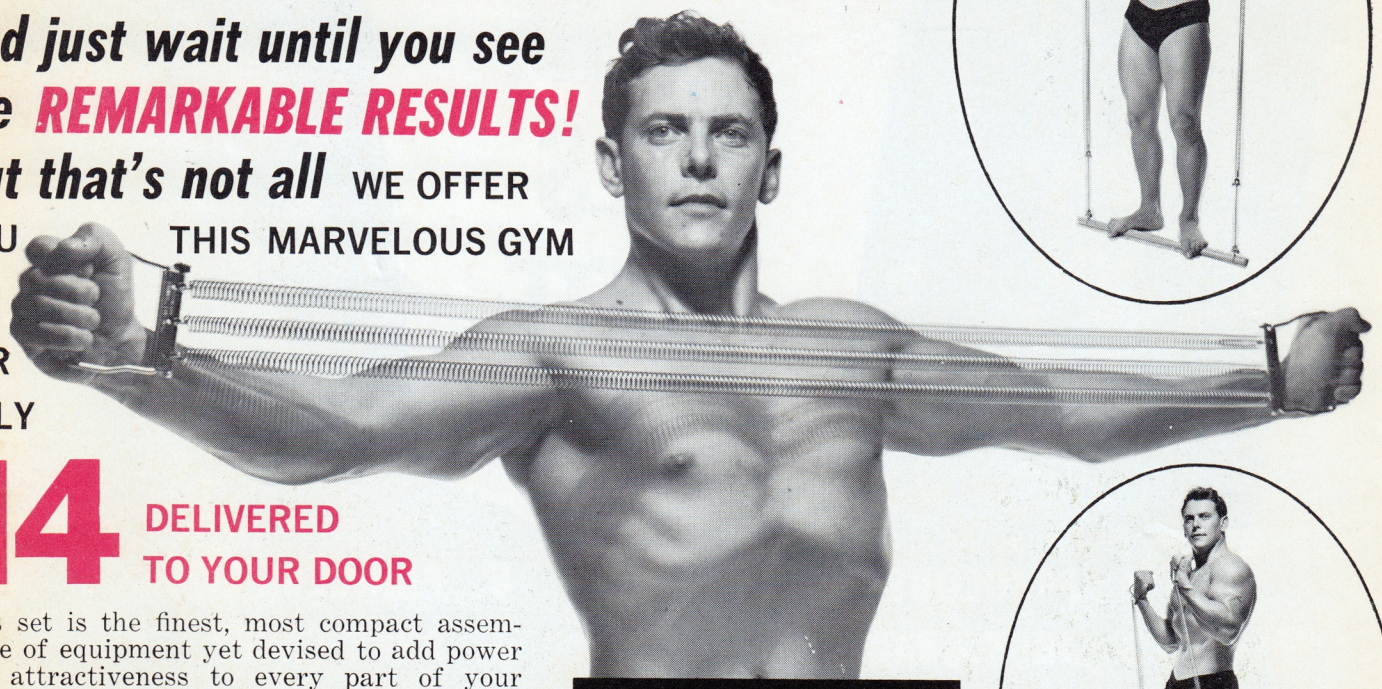

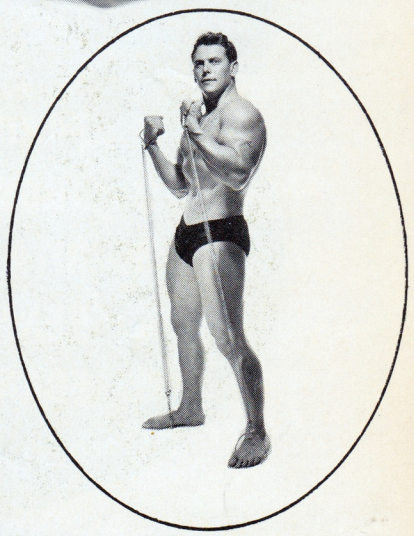

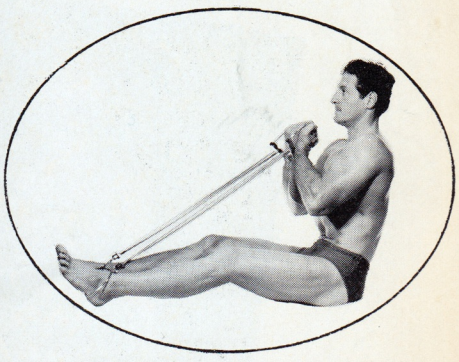

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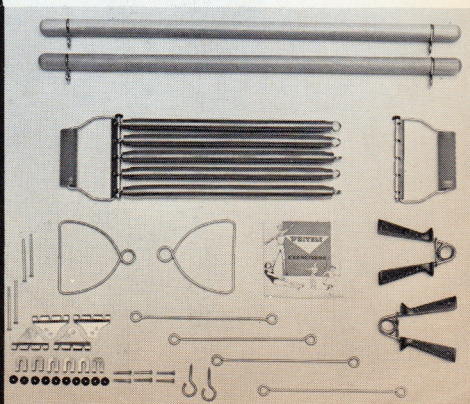

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